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## AMONG THE HEATHER.

A Highland Story.

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### CHAPTER VI.

'Wine, that makes cowards brave, the  
dying strong,  
Is a poor cordial 'gainst a woman's  
tongue.' SOMERVILLE.

JUST before lunch next day, the carriage sent to fetch Miss Duff drove up the avenue, and Fanny hurried out to meet and welcome her aunt. This lady, possessing a strong character, and having something to do with the final events of this story, certainly merits some description. She was tall, dark, slight, with fine features, sharp eyes, and a *very* determined mouth, slightly descending at the corners; her hair was raven black, without one thread of gray, despite her sixty years. Her most erect figure was attired in a brown dress, short and perfectly plain, a large black-silk bonnet, and waterproof travelling-cloak. Such was Miss Duff in personal appearance; what her character was I hope to make this little story tell. Under her right arm she carried Bijou, and in her left a bundle of umbrellas. Now it constituted one of this old lady's many peculiarities that nowhere did she stir

without the said bundle; what charm she found in it no one had as yet discovered, but there it always was whenever she made the slightest move from home. The first of these travelled umbrellas was a very large silk one—that was for Sundays and high days; then there was an equally large alpaca one—for every-day use of course. So far, so good, there was some sense in these; but the third was another good-sized silk umbrella, large enough for a wet day, even in the Highlands; *this* she termed her parasol, and woe be to the man, woman, or child who called it by any other name! The fourth defies description; and for its existence no reason had ever been discovered, except indeed the one she gave herself, namely that it had belonged to her grandmother. No doubt a good reason for respecting it, but surely not for carrying it about wherever the grandchild trod; rather let it rest its poor old bones in peace, as its former mistress had been doing for many years past. Pray do not think that time and space have been wasted over this description of

Miss Duff's umbrellas: we all have our peculiarities, you know, they help to make up our characters; and Miss Duff without the umbrellas would have left a good part of *her* character behind her.

She kissed her niece pompously on each cheek, entered the hall, and preceded her into the drawing-room, where Norah and Miss Tennant sat at work. Fanny followed, and was about to introduce her respective guests, when Miss Duff took the words out of her mouth: 'I think, child, you have omitted to introduce me to your young friends here; the position is awkward!'

She almost always addressed Fanny as 'Child' or 'Dear child,' and this not from any sign of affection on her part; simply, as it seemed, to mark her sense of disapproval of her youth. Poor Fanny! the fault would mend itself only too soon.

Norah and Miss Tennant rose, ready to shake hands with the pompous old lady; for surely one expects a kiss sooner than a bow from sixty years. True to her old-fashioned up-bringing, Miss Duff curtsied low and with much dignity, despite Bijou and the umbrellas.

'Will you come up-stairs and take off your things, aunt?' inquired Fanny; 'the bell will ring soon, and I am sure you must feel hungry after your journey.'

Was ever speech more unfortunate? The idea of Miss Duff feeling hungry! She who had for ages been a martyr to total loss of appetite! Most thoughtless remark, truly! She turned slowly round and contemplated her niece severely as she made answer,

'I think, child, that, with the usual thoughtlessness of young people, you forget my appetite has been worth nothing for

many years. I eat the small amount I do merely as a duty I owe society. Nevertheless, I will retire up-stairs and remove my wraps, and if the smell of food does not turn me faint, I can afterwards sit at your table whilst you eat, and while away the time with a biscuit. No doubt Bijou is hungry, poor dog; his meal-time is now an hour later than usual; I fear it may spoil his digestion. How is my nephew, and young Edward, and Mildred?' she inquired, as Fanny led the way up-stairs. 'Can Edward say the Shorter Catechism yet? he was woefully ignorant when last I visited you.'

In spite of this mournful information for a mother's ear, Fanny preserved a wonderfully cheerful countenance, as she conducted Miss Duff to her room; for how could a boy of eight, who still refused to acknowledge the difference between Pharaoh and Herod, Moses and Noah, possibly yet have mastered the difficulties of the Shorter Catechism?

Miss Duff poked about the room, examining and commenting on the arrangements; regaled Bijou with a biscuit, and finally seated herself in an armchair. Kicking off, and into a corner, her large prunella boots, she proceeded to relieve herself of something evidently weighing on her mind.

'Who is that Miss Grant I saw down-stairs? I don't remember her face.'

'Norah Grant. No, you never met her before. She is a thoroughly nice girl, one I am sure you will like; she and I were school-companions for a little while, years ago.'

'Humph! can't say I care much for schoolgirl friendships—acquaintances I should say—as a rule. They begin in missyish sentiment,

and rarely come to any good. But this, child, may be an exception, and I would be the last person to judge another; no one interferes less than I. But this girl struck me as looking worldly and frivolous: the fashion of her hair was decidedly vain; the other girl pleased me more in that respect—neat and trim; for remember, child, "beauty is vain."

Fanny could hardly command her gravity at this speech. Poor Norah vain! Why, her very greatest charm was the absence of all conceit and self-consciousness! And as to her beautiful hair, could she help its being thick and curly, any more than Miss Tennant could help hers being scant and straight, which Miss Duff had converted into 'trim and neat'!

That lady continued, 'I suppose, Fanny, I need hardly ask if you have any gentlemen friends in the house at the same time as these young girls?'

Irrepressible mischief prompted Fanny to take her up wrongly, and make answer,

'Of course you need not, dear aunt. Ned and I thought of that before asking them up all this way, and there are two very nice friends of my husband's in the house at present. At least, they are out fishing just now, but will be in before dinner, when I shall be able to introduce them to you.'

Miss Duff's face grew longer and longer as the wicked Fanny continued,

'We had asked a third friend, but unfortunately he could not accept, much to our disappointment.'

'Child, child, you misunderstand me completely. I consider you are incurring a grave responsibility, a very grave one. There surely could have been no necessity to ask them and these girls at the same time. I thought Ned

had more sense. However, during my visit I shall do all in my power to act a mother's part towards them.'

(Miss Duff had evidently never visited at a country house in her young days.)

'I am sorry Ned should be out on your arrival, aunt,' pursued Fanny, taking her lecture meekly, but following up with another remark spiced with mischief. 'The girls and I should have been dull all day without any of them, and it will be so nice to have you with us now.'

Miss Duff frowned at the first part of this speech, but was mollified by its termination, and remarked,

'I suppose the Highland air makes you all hungry, so I won't detain you any longer from your lunch-table. Let us go down,' and Miss Duff descended the stairs, and stalked into the dining-room, looking as if she felt herself in much the same position as a visitor to the 'Zoo' to see the animals fed.

She proceeded to kiss, rather against their will, Teddy and Milly, who were already settled at table in their high chairs. Teddy had an especial aversion to his great-aunt, partly arising, I believe, from her habit of calling him 'young Edward' instead of by his usual *sobriquet* of 'Ted.'

She seated herself now at table, eyed its contents, and helped herself to one dry biscuit. Fanny had prepared a tempting lunch for the old lady—cold game, delicious rolls, fresh butter and cream, everything nice she could think of; but no, Miss Duff 'had not the heart' for any of these things: she would 'just eat her biscuit and drink a glass of plain cold water,' laying particular emphasis on the adjectives, as if she rather expected to see it served up hot,

and cooked in some fancy way. Fanny knew the old lady's ways, so did not press her, but quietly continued helping the rest of the party, and then began her own lunch, chatting pleasantly the while. Norah was taking furtive glances at the old lady, Fanny having warned her of her peculiarities in this line, and was therefore not surprised, but considerably amused, after the lapse of a few minutes, to hear her say,

'Fanny, I think if I may carve myself a small morsel of that cold game, I could just manage to play with it. For now I remember, it is one of the very few things I *can* eat.'

Fanny gladly passed the dish, and Miss Duff's reason for carving for herself soon became apparent, for she cut a huge piece of cold game, and if what followed was an example of her 'play,' she would have been a priceless treasure at a hard day's work. No old lady ever made a better lunch, though the process of getting through it became rather monotonous, the same acting going on with every new dish of which she partook. Bijou kept the performance from becoming too tedious, for he ate everything he could induce any one to bestow on his greedy self, till he looked as if an apoplectic fit must follow.

Miss Duff returned to the drawing-room after lunch, and was induced by Fanny to settle herself comfortably on the sofa; she was in a much better humour, and discoursed amiably to all the party, even going so far as to offer Norah and Miss Tennant each a peppermint from the depths of her large pocket. Norah was about politely to refuse, when she met Fanny's warning glance; for to refuse one of Miss Duff's peppermints meant to offend her mortally, as she only offered them

when in high good-humour. Miss Tennant had accepted the dainty at once; for had she not heard that 'all Scotch people ate peppermint' ? and being anxious to glean all she could from her short visit, here was an opportunity not to be despised ! So she accepted the proffered sweetmeat, and on Miss Duff condescendingly asking 'how she liked it ?' answered of course, 'O, charming !' Nevertheless, she soon rose and beat a hurried retreat from the room, from which we may draw our own conclusions; probably could we see the portion of her diary written that evening, we should find, 'Ate a small sweetmeat, indigenous to these parts, known by the name of peppermint; found it unpalatable.'

Fanny was shortly afterwards called from the room; and Miss Duff, evidently considering this a good opportunity to act the part of mother, settled herself on the sofa more comfortably, looked over her spectacled nose, and began, 'How have you enjoyed your stay so far, my dear ? This is your first visit to these parts, is it not ?'

'O no,' answered Norah; 'I spent more than a month here last year, and enjoyed it immensely; the time passed only too quickly.'

'Ah, indeed,' and Miss Duff was evidently not much interested by Norah's answer. 'Any of this year's party staying in the house then ? in a would-be casual way.'

Norah observed her tactics at once, and determined that not for worlds should the true state of her feelings be discovered through any admission on her part; so she answered,

'Yes; Mr. Leicester spent a fortnight here at the same time last year, so he and I are old friends, you see.'



'O yes, *I* see,' remarked the old lady, nodding her head wisely and smiling slightly to herself, as she thought, 'No less than I expected; a clear case here, and no mistake! So much for Fanny's idea of chaperonage! However, I shall do all I can to put a stop to it, if I in the least disapprove.' She continued aloud, 'Ah, yes, very nice indeed; old friends, I see. Well, my dear, and now tell me what this young gentleman is like.'

'Rather tall, slight, fair, and very good-looking,' was the answer.

'Gracious, child, do you suppose I care one straw about his looks? I meant his character of course; what is his moral character, child?

'I should think perfectly irreproachable,' answered the naughty Norah: 'most amiable and good-tempered; I really don't think he possesses one vicious quality. I am *sure* you will like him.'

'O, are you?' in a slightly satirical tone; 'well, perhaps I shall. And what is this Mr. Lyndam like?'

Norah managed to keep grave over the slightly altered name, as she made answer very indifferently, 'Mr. Lindsay? O, I should fancy he is nice; but I have seen so little of him, and have had so few opportunities of judging.'

'No danger in *that* quarter, at least,' soliloquised Miss Duff; 'no doubt this Mr. Linseed is a good and estimable young man, and therefore does not find favour in the little monkey's eyes. She said nothing of *his* looks, by the bye; no doubt he is plain; so much the better. I shall make friends with him, certainly. The other girl, I fancy, will not need so much care; she looks more sensible.'

Miss Duff, feeling perfectly satisfied with her own acuteness, pursued the subject no longer,

but chatted away on other matters to Norah, who felt equally satisfied, knowing pretty well how completely she had blinded the old lady to a sense of her true feelings.

That evening, after she had been introduced to the two gentlemen, and had had time to form her own estimate of their characters, the opinion of Miss Elizabeth Duff remained the same. She was consequently barely civil to Percival, who seemed bent on making himself conspicuously attentive to Norah—begged to peel her fruit, wind her wool, turn her music; and though none of these things was he allowed to do, Miss Duff's keen eyes did not notice that, but only took in his attentive manner and meaning looks, till she inwardly was reduced to a state of raving. Her ire against Percival showed itself in intense civility to Geoffrey, who began to think that his friend Ross had basely slandered his aunt, for he found her a perfectly harmless and rather interesting old lady. Perhaps the secret of his good opinion lay in the fact that, after the fewest possible commonplace remarks, Miss Duff had cleverly led the subject round to Norah, and, as may be supposed, had found no difficulty in keeping it there. Silly old woman! though she really meant no harm; her spectacles evidently needed new glasses; for she was just as blind now as she had been in the afternoon. She chattered away, descending on Norah—how she seemed a nice girl; but what kind of woman she turned out all depended on what sort of a husband she got; and how Miss Duff much feared she would throw herself away on some fop of a man just for his silly effeminate good looks. At last, waxing more and more confidential, she said,

'In fact, Mr. Linden, I am sure you must agree with me that we should be very blind not to observe what is going on under our very noses;' and she nodded knowingly in the direction where poor Norah was being nearly bored to death by Percival, and snubbing him with every snub she could devise, though to no avail.

Miss Duff was particularly pleased at the frown that appeared on Geoffrey's face at this last remark, showing that his feelings on the matter coincided so entirely with her own.

'I see you think just as I do,' she observed. 'In fact, with me it is *more* than "think;" for Miss Grant seems a confidential little thing, and told me this afternoon that she considered Mr. Leicester "perfect in every respect." I quote her very words.'

O, what endless mischief is done by these idle talkers! 'and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.' Surely St. Paul must have known one of the many Miss Duffs who roam about the world at large, when he wrote those wise true words of his.

The 'thing she ought not to have spoken,' those foolish meddlesome words, rankled in Geoffrey's mind, and confirmed an utterly groundless opinion he had already formed concerning Norah and Leicester; thereby causing a time of his life, which might, as we know, have been turned into perfect happiness, to become just the reverse, though he contrived to hide his feelings in a measure successfully.

They say the course of true love never did run smooth (though there *have* been exceptions to prove the rule); and Norah and Geoffrey must have their trials, I suppose, like the rest of the world.

## CHAPTER VII.

'Thou striveest nobly,  
When hearts of sterner stuff perhaps had  
sunk.'  
JOANNA BAILLIE.

GLORIOUSLY dawned the next morning, everything looking bright and promising for the Keiths' picnic, fixed for that day.

About ten, our party started, in the large wagonette, for Glen Inver, there to join the Keiths, proceed with them to the foot of Ben Wyvis, some two or three miles distant, and begin their climb together. There had been a small discussion as to the propriety of Miss Duff joining the picnic. Fanny, knowing perfectly well the thing was out of the question, had determined to remain at home and entertain her aunt, letting Mr. Ross chaperon the party. In the end the matter was arranged so; the old lady only becoming reasonable after Mr. Ross had explained to her that the mountain measured over 3000 feet, and that they proposed climbing to the summit. She at last gave in, and watched the carriage leave the door with a tolerably cheerful countenance.

An hour's drive brought them to Glen Inver, where everything was in course of preparation: Daisy and Nolly at the door, saddled and ready; two large carts standing waiting, one to be filled with provisions, the other with any members of the party who chose that most uncomfortable mode of conveyance. In and out of the door swarmed the guests, and a goodly number they were. Besides the Glen Inver party already mentioned, there were Mr. Keith, a jolly and kind old gentleman; his eldest son Henry and four or five sportsmen, who had been out shooting when our friends called before.

They were now ushered into

the drawing-room, where they found the few stationary members of the family. Miss Jim was flying about, enjoying the bustle immensely; hair loose as usual, dress tucked up, looking altogether lively and business-like, as she cut sandwiches, superintended the storing away of provisions in the cart, and tried, between her many avocations, to entertain any guests she came across. A capital girl for 'shooting,' was Miss Jim Keith.

'O, do take pity on me, Miss Grant!' she called out; 'come and help me to cut these sandwiches. The servants are all so busy, and I undertook the making of these; and I don't believe they will ever be finished in time. We ought to be off now—those of us who mean to walk to the foot, at least.'

'Are we to eat all this?' asked Norah, laughing, as she set busily to work, looking at the table groaning with provisions waiting to be stowed away.

It would be difficult to say what was *not* there—cold chickens, cold game, cold meat of every description; sandwiches in mountain piles; cold puddings, tarts, and tartlets; cake, fruit, bread-and-butter, biscuits; bottles of cream, ginger-beer, lemonade, and wine; everything, in fact, that the most greedy person could desire; and who is not rather greedy at a picnic in the Highlands?

'You certainly can't know much of the effect of mountain air if you call this too much, Miss Grant,' pursued Miss Jim, cutting and buttering diligently as she spoke. 'I was just considering whether mother had ordered enough; I wonder how many sandwiches I should cut for each? Peter,' she continued to that young man, who was wandering about, getting into every one's

way, expressing a great desire to taste each dish before he carried it out to the cart, 'come here, and tell me how many of these sandwiches you think you could conveniently manage. You should be a good criterion!'

'O, to everlasting! any number to oblige,' answered the greedy Peter.

'I don't feel much wiser than before,' laughed Jim: 'let's hope the rest of the party are not gifted with quite such boundless appetites, or I shall not have finished to-day. You can't think what a greedy fellow that brother of mine is,' she observed to Norah; 'he is just like the mice, always to be found where there are any crumbs going.'

At last enough sandwiches were said to be cut; the girls now repaired outside, where most of the party were already collected. Those who wished could drive the two miles of road in the Rosses' wagonette, offered for the purpose. Mrs. Keith and her husband, Mr. Ross and an elderly gentleman or two, availed themselves of it and drove off, leaving the rest with the two ponies to follow as they chose. The younger Miss Graham and Mr. Ward had started some ten minutes before; and the remainder now prepared to follow suit.

'Allow me to recommend Daisy to you, Miss Grant,' said Henry Keith; 'she is a capital old pony, and will carry you safely and easily up.'

Norah laughed, but refused, preferring the ascent on her own two feet.

Eventually they broke up into twos and threes, Miss Keith riding one pony and Miss Tennant the other, after duly securing a very young gentleman to lead it, who was flattered by her notice. 'She was so afraid the dear pony

might shy, you know!' If she had been afraid of its having an apoplectic fit, she would have been nearer the mark; for these little animals were about as fat and stolid as two good-sized barrels. Jim and Norah started off on foot together, and were soon joined by a Mr. Dean, a young gentleman who evidently entertained a great admiration for the first-named young lady, of which she was entirely and rather amusingly unconscious. Norah, in her secret heart, had hoped, and rather expected, Geoffrey would join their little party; and was therefore rather piqued to see him walk off with the eldest Miss Graham, a nice chatty girl, and appearing to get into pleasant conversation very soon. The truth was, that at that very moment Geoffrey would have given—I was going to say his two feet, but they were perhaps too indispensable just then to be parted with—but he would have given much to be allowed to climb, just for one half-hour, with Norah alone, and speak to her of the subject nearest his heart. But Miss Duff's foolish words had done much mischief. He could not help seeing how constantly Norah seemed to snub any demonstration on Percival's part; but then, he had known girls do just the same, and end by accepting the object of their rebuffs. Somehow, he had not expected such conduct from Norah. And yet, what was he to believe when Miss Duff had repeated to him, as she said, 'Norah's very words'? He certainly would not take the vacant place at her side now, when he knew how much she would rather have Percival there; and looking back once, as he paused to open a gate, he saw that young gentleman, who had been detained behind for some cause or other, making

frantic endeavours to reach the object of his affections. Geoffrey impatiently shut the gate with a bang, which made Miss Graham start and think her companion must have a most uncertain temper. Norah also was aware of Percival's designs and quickened her pace accordingly, till Miss Jim, despite her longer training, called for mercy, at the same time complimenting her on her walking powers.

They had reached the hill by this time, and now began their climbing. There is always such a difference, if you glance round on an expedition of this sort, in the manners and customs of the people there assembled. In the matter of dress, for instance. Norah was attired in a pretty green serge, made plain and short on purpose for climbing, showing her sensible woollen stockings and neat thick-soled shoes; a pretty little hat fixed firmly on her head; a good thick stick to help her up; and there she was, almost regardless of a shower, should one chance to fall. Miss Jim rather resembled her in attire; but she was taller and more developed than Norah; besides, her hat had the peculiarity of disliking to stick on her head; consequently she usually carried it in her hand, regardless, rather to her mother's regret, of her complexion. She never could conform to the usages of society, she said, and preferred letting the wind play through her dark locks, to bothering herself about her appearance. Both she and Norah being natural and graceful in every look and movement, their climbing also had this characteristic; and they thoroughly enjoyed the exercise. Miss Tennant, on the contrary, had appeared, attired for the picnic, in a print dress, fashionably made, pretty and fresh it is true, but not

quite the gown for mountain climbing; a hat to correspond; shoes not over thick; altogether got up more for a summer's day on the Thames than a Highland scramble. Fanny had, of course, noticed her mistake; and, being of much the same height and size, ventured to offer her her own tweed costume. But Miss Tennant had declined with thanks, seeming moreover rather offended at the proposition; consequently she now looked about the least well dressed of them all, as the print had been crushed during the drive, and already began to look tawdry and draggle-tailed. Geoffrey had silently noticed the difference between the two girls as he handed them into the carriage before starting, looking with approval at Norah's trim and graceful little figure.

Meantime they had been climbing on, keeping to the order in which they had first started, except that Percival had gained his wish, and managed to attach himself to Norah's side, endeavouring to be particularly polite and agreeable. As, however, he was arrayed in his kilt—a fact which always rendered him particularly obnoxious to her—and as his remarks were slightly monotonous, from being always of the same nature, namely personal, she only returned him short and unsatisfactory answers, keeping up a constant chatter with Jim on the other side. At last that young lady, feeling really sorry for the amount of snubbing her friend bestowed on poor Percival, determined to lend him her aid, and so managed that in a few minutes he and Norah were left together, she and Mr. Dean falling behind, of which the last-named gentleman was only too glad, 'these mountain-paths being really too narrow for four.'

Poor Norah! she began to doubt if the picnic she had been looking forward to was not going to turn out a very stupid affair after all; and worse, for she had easily seen for the last day or two that Percival had something on his mind he wished to say, and which, indeed, a man with a little more moral courage would have said long ago. Her repeated snubs alone had prevented this, and if he and she were to climb this hill together, as seemed at present probable, she rather dreaded the results. Ward them off to the utmost of her power she would; but it was weary work, which worried her, and would certainly spoil all the pleasure of her picnic.

She walked on for some time, occupied with these not very pleasing reflections, and rather silent, in spite of all Percival's efforts to the contrary, when he suddenly uttered an exclamation, turned aside for a moment, and returned with a sprig of white heather, which he held out to her.

'What is this for, Mr. Leicester?' she inquired, in a surprised manner. 'I have nowhere to put it, if you mean it for me, and one can't climb with one's hands full; why not put it in your button-hole? it would set off that fine Highland costume of yours to perfection.'

Poor Percival looked crestfallen.

'Don't you really know what giving a piece of white heather means, Miss Grant?'

'No, I don't; and, what's more, I don't care to know,' said Norah hurriedly. That was a fib, for she knew perfectly well. 'I think flower language is stupid and sentimental nonsense, and I wonder you don't think so too. I should not carry that bit all the way up,' she continued, exasper-

ated, but at the same time hardly able to keep from laughing at the sheepish and pathetic way in which Percival gazed at his little twig. 'You are sure to find plenty more at the top.'

Percival tossed it away; and as the couple behind came on it was picked up by Mr. Dean and presented to Miss Jim, who in all innocence took it, laughing, and stuck it in her hat, neither of them having observed the little scene in front.

Percival, much disappointed, proceeded silently, and evidently cogitating deeply. Presently, in a decidedly Peter Grievous tone, he began,

'I can't think, Miss Grant, how it is, but for the last few days nothing I do seems to please you.' ('It's a mercy he has discovered that at last,' thought Norah.) 'It never used to be so last year, when you really seemed to like me. Have I offended you in any way lately?'

'Nonsense; how can you talk such utter rubbish? What put such foolish ideas into your head, Mr. Leicester? Of course I am not offended; you have done nothing to make it worth my while. I should advise you to get rid of such silly notions as fast as possible; don't be so constantly thinking of yourself and what opinion other people have of you. In the first place, it's very conceited, and you won't be any the happier for bothering your head about the matter, and only lose half the pleasure you might get out of life. I like you just as much one year as the other' (which was perfectly true). 'Now, don't you think this conversation is becoming decidedly slow and uninteresting? Because I do. So let us talk of something else. This is the first time you have made this climb, is it not?'

Unheeding her last remark, Percival began,

'I *will* talk of something else. You must have seen for the last few days how I—'

'Now, Mr. Leicester,' said Norah, interrupting, 'I told you only a minute ago not to talk of yourself; and there you are back to the subject in no time. I assure you I feel no possible interest in it; so as you don't seem to be quite master of yourself this morning, and I see the ponies are not far behind, I shall just sit down on this comfortable-looking rock and wait till they come up. I rather fancy our topics of conversation are exhausted, and require some new element.'

Norah *was* provoking, it must be confessed, as she sat so calmly perched on the rock, digging little holes in the earth with her stick, and patiently waiting till the riders came up.

'I'll *make* her hear me by and by,' muttered Percival to himself. 'I believe in her heart of hearts she cares for me, and only does this to tease me. I vow I won't let this day close without making one more attempt.'

The riders came slowly up, asking Norah if she were tired, and if she would not take a lift. But she jumped up with alacrity now, saying,

'No, thanks; Mr. Leicester and I had only got rather tired of our own company, and thought we should like to join you. Let me lead Daisy, Miss Keith; I should enjoy it really.'

Poor Percival had to attach himself to the other pony, and Miss Tennant now rode on with a gallant on either side—in her 'proper element,' as she would probably herself have termed it.

It had been settled that they should lunch before arriving at



the summit, so that only those who wished need climb the last steep bit: and soon the riders came in sight of the spot, where the carts were now being busily unloaded by the men. Mr. Ward and Miss Julia Graham had arrived before the others, and were discovered, rather to their confusion, seated in a corner sheltered by some large rocks, engaged in earnest conversation, with heads very close together. Geoffrey and Miss Graham arrived next; and soon, by detachments of twos and threes, all were collected there.

Then began the business of laying the lunch, and all hands were willingly offered. Norah felt glad to have some active work to do; poor little thing, she had not much enjoyed herself so far, and she worked away busily, trying to keep clear of Percival, who however *would* offer his services unasked, wanting to help her to carry the most ridiculously light things, on the plea that they were too heavy for her. At last, having helped all she could, and while every one was standing idly about, or exploring near, waiting for the potatoes to boil, Norah escaped by herself and climbed on, some two or three hundred feet higher, in order to gain a point from where she felt sure there would be a lovely view. She reached the place and sat down, being well rewarded for her exertions by the splendid prospect that now lay before her. She felt glad to be alone for a minute, and rested her head on her hand rather sadly, feeling disappointed and worried. Not one word had Geoffrey spoken to her since they started; and far, far too many had Percival. What could she have done to offend Mr. Lindsay? And she went on racking her poor little brains to remember, till the face grew very

sad indeed, not looking in the least as if it belonged to one of a merry picnic-party.

'Think of an angel, and you will hear his wings,' says the proverb; and the next minute Norah heard the heather rustle, and 'Sitting here all by yourself, Miss Grant?' sounded close by in Geoffrey's voice.

'O yes, I came up to get the view,' said Norah, rising and blushing involuntarily at the object of her thoughts presenting himself so suddenly before her.

'That was just my reason for coming too. I thought this rock must command a glorious prospect, and so it does—splendid,' said Geoffrey, speaking cheerily on purpose. He had caught a glimpse of Norah's face before she heard him approach, and he was much mistaken if those were not the remains of tell-tale tears on her cheek, in spite of the assumed brightness of her manner. What could she find in the view to make her look so sad? He wondered if that stupid ass Leicester had been doing or saying anything to make her look like this. Surely he might have made a better use of the golden opportunity he had had all the morning, duffer that he was.

The true cause of Norah's looks never came across his mind, and not for the world would she that it had: so her manner was quite cheery and bright, and after a minute spent in discussing the beauties of the scene she proposed that they should retrace their steps, 'as surely those tiresome potatoes must have boiled by now.'

So they found on their arrival; for every one was waiting for them and wondering what had detained them. Poor Norah felt her cheeks becoming uncomfortably hot as they questioned her, and heartily wished she had never absented

herself. Kind Mrs. Keith noticed her confused manner, and, taking pity on her, called her over to a snug little corner near herself, chatting in a friendly motherly way, till Norah felt quite at her ease again. Dear soul, she had so many grown-up boys and girls of her own to manage, and just now a houseful of other people's bairns as well, that she was constantly on the look-out for some lovers' quarrel or trouble which her gentle and ready tact was needed to smooth; and seeing Geoffrey and Norah return together, she at once settled their relative positions in her own mind as 'a lover and his lass.'

Percival had established himself at some distance, and was being engaged in conversation by Miss Tennant; so Norah's mind felt easy in that quarter, and she ate her lunch seated between Mrs. Keith and Geoffrey, chatting away in answer to her hostess's many kind questions, till she felt that this was indeed the pleasantest bit of her day, so far as it had gone at least. Geoffrey joined in the conversation in his kind and deferential way, speaking so pleasantly and intelligently on everyday subjects, avoiding anything personal which could in any way distress her. So different from Percival's attempts at conversation, that Norah found herself involuntarily drawing comparisons between the two, very much to the detriment of the last-named gentleman.

How every one enjoyed that lunch, to be sure! Things tasted so differently from what they did in the house; and marvellously few remains there were when at length every one had refused one morsel more and rose 'to leave the dining-room,' as Mr. Keith put it.

'Won't one of you young

ladies favour us with a song?' he asked, as they seated themselves about, resting for a few minutes before beginning the final ascent. 'This is just the time for a song, and it ought to be a good old Scotch one.'

'Jim, you sing one first,' observed Miss Graham; 'the young lady of the house ought to open the performance, you know, and you have such a heap of Scotch songs in your collection.'

Jim assented at once; not requiring to be pressed, as the manner of some young ladies is. After pondering over her store for a moment, and making her selection, she began in her rich true voice one of her father's favourite songs:

'Touch not the nettle lest it should sting  
thee,  
Waly sae green as the bracken grows;  
Love not the lass that ye canna win,  
For the bands o' love are hard to loose.'

She was interrupted, much to her indignation, at the end of the first verse by a murmur of disapproval from the gentlemen, Mr. Dean exclaiming,

'Come now, Miss Keith, where do you get your Scotch songs! for those words in the third line are all wrong. *My* edition has it "Love na the *lad*."'

'Then your edition has it all wrong,' she answered, laughing. 'Do you suppose that I would sing a song with words like that! Moreover, I consider you all excessively ill-mannered to interrupt me in this fashion; so you may just sing the rest for yourself with what words you choose! Daddy dear, I'll finish the song for you in private some day, I assure you.'

And not one line more could she be induced to sing, in spite of abject apologies and entreaties to continue. Miss Jim kept firm, and sat on her rock, laughing and twirling her hat, looking as obsti-

nate as it was possible for such a sweet-tempered girl to look.

Miss Julia Graham next sang a pretty little sentimental ditty, all made up of airy nothings, cupids, forget-me-nots and kisses, and a few broken-hearted exclamations. Nobody seemed much to enjoy it, except Mr. Ward, who listened to the pretty warbler with ravished attention, and thanked her in a markedly warm manner as she ceased.

After one or two more songs, Percival of course included among the singers (for this was an opportunity not to be lost of exhibiting his vocal powers), those who wished to climb the remaining bit were informed they had better start at once if they wanted to reach home before nightfall. Tea would be ready for them on their return, Mrs. Keith and her eldest daughter remaining below to make it.

Norah waited till she had heard the rest of the party announce their intention of attempting the ascent, and then asked to be allowed to stay and help with the tea preparations. She felt a little tired, she said, and would prefer to rest.

Geoffrey, who overheard her request, turned round surprised, and could not resist saying,

'Miss Grant, that doesn't sound like you; I am sure you would enjoy the fine view from the top. Have you turned suddenly lazy? Won't you change your mind?'

But Norah, seeing with satisfaction that Percival had been walked off by Mr. Keith, and was now gradually disappearing from view, kept firm to her intention. She would much rather remain below, as she really felt tired.

Now had Geoffrey offered to stay and help with these same tea preparations, Norah's little heart would gladly have answered, 'Stay,' though I still doubt if her

manner would have acted in unison. But to propose such a thing never entered his head.

'Some lovers' quarrel, I suppose,' he thought, as he walked off after the others. 'Strange this manner of hers, though. Can Miss Duff by any chance have made a mistake in what she said? I fear not. She repeated to me, as she assured me, Norah's "very words," and inferred that they were next door to engaged. Ah, well, I suppose the Fates have decreed that I am to die a bachelor, and perhaps in time I may resign myself to my doom. Three weeks ago I desired nothing better. I shall not be the first man who has had to resign the darling wish of his heart, tough work though it is;' and poor Geoffrey sighed as he strode on, soon coming up with Mr. Keith and Percival, and continuing in their company till, after a few more puffs and pulls, they reached the summit, where the rest of the 'picnickers' already were.

Percival glanced round, evidently expecting to see Norah among the number, and turned with a disappointed face to Geoffrey, who stood near.

'I say, Lindsay, didn't you fancy Miss Grant was on in front of us?'

'Hardly,' said Geoffrey, smiling, 'seeing I left her below some ten minutes before joining you and Mr. Keith. She said she was tired, and preferred the rest.'

'Do you think she was really tired, or only wanted pressing? I believe if I had asked her she would have joined us.'

'Do you, indeed, Mr. Leicester?' remarked Geoffrey, with a slightly satirical smile. 'You seem to have great ideas of your own powers of persuasion. Pray what makes you so sure you could have induced Miss Grant to come?'

Percival looked at him and pondered for a moment before answering; then taking him by the button-hole, he said, in a low confidential tone,

'Can you keep a secret, Lindsay?'

'Generally.'

'No; but really, on your honour, can you? because I have something I should like much to tell you.'

'Tell away, then,' said Geoffrey rather impatiently. 'I am not given to blab as a rule.'

'I believe I may trust you; what I want to tell you is this. You ask me how I feel so sure I could have induced Miss Grant to join us. You must know, then, that she and I are old friends, not mere acquaintances of a day. We spent together up here what was to me the happiest time of my life last year, and I can't help believing I was fortunate enough to make some small impression on her. You know living together in a country house for some time *is* dangerous work,' he added, with a satisfied smile that nearly drove Geoffrey wild; 'and though of late she has been rather shy and coy at times, who could help liking her the better for that? All girls like to find fault with us poor men sometimes. And, Lindsay, as I have begun I may as well make a clean breast of it, and tell you that my one cherished ambition, which I live to fulfil, which I dream of by night and think of by day, is to make that girl my wife; and between you and me and this mountain I don't mean to rest till I have achieved it!'

'O yes, I understand,' said Geoffrey, cutting him short impatiently. 'Well, I wish you joy; and if you gain her—mind, if you gain her—O Leicester, take care of her, on your conscience, for you will have won a treasure

—see that you value it;' and he strode off, leaving Percival thinking to himself,

'What a gushing old fellow that is, to be sure! and I had always fancied him so reserved. However, he need not have cut up quite so rough, nor preached me my duty in quite so determined a manner. Of course I shall value her as she deserves; I should think I knew just about as well as he the treasure that she is. But he meant well, no doubt, poor fellow; and I must take it so.'

As Geoffrey had stood listening to the youth's long and conceited harangue, he felt that it would be an intense satisfaction to pick him up and lightly drop him over the mountain-side. That this dolt, this conceited booby, should calmly speak of winning that little jewel of a girl; and that she should not see through the utter vanity and littleness of the man! If, as it is said, marriages are made in heaven, surely such a one as this never could be so! 'How was it that things seemed to get so unfairly settled in this beautiful world?' he thought, as he glanced away over the noble mountains that rose all around, one above the other, till their summits seemed almost to reach the heavens. Would this youth, this mere boy, ever turn into a good and reliable husband? Was he such a man as a girl like Norah dare from her heart swear 'to love, honour, and obey'? Would his affection remain strong and faithful till death came to part them? Would he be tender and strong, loving and true, as long as God let them be together? And then the horrid thought arose—Percival was rich, and Norah comparatively poor. Could this weigh with her in her choice? Ah, no; he cast the thought from him with scorn, thankful that he could honestly

do so. Such a fact, he knew, could carry no weight with it in Norah's eyes.

Poor fellow! This was surely the most bitter struggle he had ever been called upon to make and conquer; but he did conquer at last, for when he joined the rest, though his face may have been a shade paler than usual, no one noticed it; and if his manner was rather quieter than before, the others were gay and busy with their own affairs, and did not remark the difference, but chattered away brightly as they made the descent, and arrived at their encampment, where tea was now temptingly prepared.

They had to hurry over it, as the sun was now fast setting, and nightfall on the mountains was not then to be desired. They soon gathered their traps together, and the cavalcade set out on its homeward march. Miss Tennant expressed a wish to walk; and Nolly being thereby riderless, Norah accepted his help and rode on beside Miss Keith, glad of her escort; for she saw Percival's determination in his manner, and dreaded what might follow were they left alone together. She felt tired and worried, longing to be once more at home in the solitude of her own room, where, if the truth be confessed, she promised herself the luxury of a good cry. Poor little soul! things had seemed to go all wrong to-day. Ah, Norah, remember what you said to Geoffrey on the hill the other day:

'Behind the clouds is the sun still shining,  
Some days must be dark and dreary.'

It was bright weather when you said that, and the clouds had not begun to make their appearance; but where is your faith now they are just gathering? Cheer up! Behind the clouds the sun is shining; only believe it!

## CHAPTER VIII.

'Talkers are no good doers.'

SHAKESPEARE.

'There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.'

SHAKESPEARE.

It was past nine before Mr. Ross and his party reached home; and as they drove up the avenue, the light, streaming out from between the red curtains of the cosy drawing-room, looked to Norah unusually bright and cheery. Fanny came to the door to meet them.

'I thought you had all made up your minds to pass the night on the hill, you are so late in returning! Have you had a pleasant time?'

'Very much so indeed, my dear,' answered her husband, who had had every reason to find the day pleasant.

'A perfectly charming day, dear Mrs. Ross; I don't think I ever enjoyed a picnic so much.' This from Miss Tennant, who also had seen everything through rose-coloured spectacles.

'Awfully jolly time—capital lunch,' from Percival, who, though the opportunity he desired had not as yet been granted, still saw no reason to be dissatisfied with his day's work.

Norah and Geoffrey said nothing, letting the others' conversation cover their silence; and, after a few questions and answers, all went up-stairs to prepare for the high tea which awaited them, only Miss Duff and her niece remaining below.

'I am glad they've had such a nice day, aunt, are not you? They seem all to have enjoyed their picnic.'

Miss Duff grunted.

'No fear of that, child; we are only too apt to forget that this world is a "vale of tears," and enjoy our pleasures here too much.'

Fanny always disliked this style of talk, and so made answer,

'Do you think so, aunt? I believe we are meant to take all the enjoyment we can get out of this pleasant world of ours, and I never can make up my mind to think of it as a howling wilderness. What could be more innocent than to-day's pleasuring, for instance? Surely these things would never have been given us, had we not been intended to enjoy them, without abusing them, I mean.'

Miss Duff drew herself up to her full height, looked mortally offended, and made answer,

'Seems to me, child, you rather forget our relative ages; my opinions are based on experience, while yours—well, I won't say much about them, but at least your wisdom has not been tested by so many trials as mine; and I tell you, child, the more you wean yourself from this world and its vain shows and pleasures, so much happier you will become. It is not the actual picnic I object to, but the principle of the thing, the consequences that—'

Miss Duff was going on to explain her many objections; but at this moment Norah reëntered the room, and the old lady had to stop suddenly short in her harangue, cough, try to appear unconscious, and finally call Bijou and march out of the room. Fanny followed to see that everything had been comfortably prepared for tea. Thus Norah was left alone; but not for long: a footstep sounded in the hall, and in a minute Percival entered. His face brightened as he saw Norah alone, and 'now or never,' he said to himself, as he advanced towards her.

'Have you had an enjoyable day, Miss Grant?' he began by way of introduction.

'Pretty well; but I am tired now,' she said, feeling disinclined to talk.

'It has been a very happy one to me; and, Miss Grant,' he continued rather nervously, though with some assurance, 'to make it perfectly so, I want to have this day crowned—'

'What with?' interrupted Norah, 'heather?'

'No, Miss Grant; don't laugh, this matter is a most serious one to me. You must have noticed that I have wished all day, only you never gave me a chance, to speak to you about—'

Once more Norah determined to put a stop to this, and interrupted him.

'Do you know, Mr. Leicester, I have got such a nasty headache this evening, and hardly feel up to much talking. Some other day I shall be glad to discuss any of your plans, but just now I should so enjoy being quiet till tea-time. Pray forgive my interrupting you in this rude way, but I am sure I should not do your plans justice to-night.'

What more could Percival say? and as Miss Duff at that moment entered the room, he thought it was perhaps just as well he had not got too far in his declaration, as it might have been awkward; he only hoped that the tiresome old lady had not heard more of their conversation than just the last few words.

Miss Duff had her spectacles on her nose as she stalked into the room, and looking keenly at Norah and Percival, 'she took in the position at a glance,' as she afterwards observed; screwed her mouth up into wonderfully small compass, and blandly remarked it was 'a fine evening.' It is so pleasant to find our conjectures prove correct; and she felt in a very good humour.



At tea that night Fanny noticed Norah's pale looks, and on being questioned she had to confess to a slight headache.

'Nothing worth speaking of, though; it will be all right by the morning, after a good night's rest.'

'I think you had better go up at once, as you won't have any more tea. I am sure bed is much the best place for a headache, and I will come up in a minute or two and see that you are comfortable,' proposed Fanny.

Norah gratefully followed the welcome advice; and as she left the room, Fanny remarked,

'I hope she has not been overdoing herself; I am surprised at her being tired, she is usually so hearty and strong.'

'I fancied she was quieter than usual at times when I happened to be near her to-day,' said Mr. Ross, who was not an observant man. Had his wife been of the party, she would probably have taken in everything at once, and set about trying to put all to rights.

Soon after tea she proposed bed; and after depositing Miss Duff and Bijou in their room, and bidding Miss Tennant good-night in hers, where she received from that damsel a gushing account of the 'really too charming day she had spent,' she betook herself to Norah's room and knocked at the door. Norah had hardly begun to undress, but was standing listlessly by the fire, and Fanny felt convinced that a minute before she had been crying.

'This will never do,' she thought; and walking briskly up, said in her most cheery way, 'Why, I expected to find you almost in bed, you lazy girl, and you have hardly begun to undress yet; I shall just stay and put you to bed like a big baby! Now

don't talk, but sit down in this armchair and I will brush your hair; that always does my headache good.'

Norah obeyed, feeling grateful at not being plied with questions and compelled to talk; for Fanny's thoughtful kindness had well-nigh brought back the tears into her eyes. On keeping her troubles to herself she was determined.

She was soon settled comfortably in bed, and as Fanny bent over to kiss and wish her good-night, she gave her a loving hug, and told her she had almost charmed away the pain.

'That's right, sleep away the rest, and you will be all right again by the morning.' She was about to leave the room, when a thought struck her, and returning once more to the bedside, she said very gently, 'There is nothing wrong besides the headache, is there, dear, that I might perhaps help to cure?'

Norah was thankful that only the flickering firelight lit the room, for the quick colour rushed to her cheeks at this question, and she answered hurriedly, giving Fanny's hand a grateful squeeze as she spoke,

'No, nothing, thank you; it will be all right by the morning.'

A fib, of course, but what could she say? Besides, what good could any one do in the matter that worried her? So once more wishing her good-night, Fanny left the room. As she opened the door of her own chamber, she could hardly restrain an exclamation of surprise; there, seated in front of the fire, in Fanny's big armchair, dragged forward for the purpose, attired in a bright violet dressing-gown, crimson shoes, and a large night-cap riding rampant on a mass of little curl-papers, sat Miss Duff with Bijou

on her knee, calm, cool, collected, looking as if settled for a long and comfortable chat. Fanny had enjoyed a good spell of this lady's company already, having had to entertain her unaided all day, and consequently gave her in her heart anything but a warm reception. Surely anything she might have to say could easily keep till to-morrow!

Miss Duff glanced round blandly as the door opened, and giving her niece by her manner an encouraging welcome to her own room, remarked,

'Ah, that's you, is it! Come in, my dear, and shut the door. I came here, desiring a few minutes' conversation; so sit down, and I will commence. You must know, then, child, that I was rather disappointed at the time that our little conversation before supper was so soon interrupted; but perhaps it was just as well, for since then I have gleaned more proofs of the unadvisability of such an expedition as that of to-day; unless, indeed, some competent person be placed at its head, to see that all goes as it should.' ('Such as myself,' she might in honesty have added, and no doubt would have done so, had not native modesty prevented.)

'Why, aunt, what can you mean? Surely nothing undesirable has happened from to-day's pleasure, except poor Norah's headache, which I hope will be all right by the morning.'

Miss Duff nodded her curl-papered head slowly, and smiling in her most exasperating manner, replied,

'When you are as old as I am, my dear, you may perhaps have found out that headaches are most convenient things, truly *most* convenient. In fact, if I may be excused for quoting Scripture, "they cover a multitude of sins."

You are young, it is true, sadly young; but I should have thought even you might have observed that for Miss Norah's headache cause is most easily to be found. Oblige me, child, by not standing fidgeting there!' she continued; 'it worries me. Pray take that chair. I have a good deal to say, and don't intend to hurry myself. Principle brought me to your chamber, principle compels me to remain.'

Fanny earnestly longed for the moment when principle would carry her away again, but complied with the old lady's request and sat down. Fireside chats are very snug and comfortable things sometimes, but it entirely depends on your confidante.

'I must tell you,' pursued Miss Duff, 'that on leaving the drawing-room, I merely betook myself up-stairs, to see if my cap was straight. Satisfied with my appearance, I retraced my steps, uncertain whether to enter the drawing-room or repair to the dining-room. Child, mark my words! Providence led me to the former! I proceeded there, carrying my spectacles in my hand. Just as I reached the door they fell—once more observe how every action was ordained. I stooped to pick them up, and fancying they were broken, naturally stood for a second on the spot, in order to ascertain, and while so engaged heard voices in the room, low voices, child—'

'Eavesdropping in fact,' thought her listener, but only nodded, and asked, 'What then?'

'Subdue your impatience—though I grant it is natural—and you shall hear "what then." Now listen. With these ears of mine, these two ears, child, I distinctly heard your friend Miss Grant, your dear bosom friend, say in low tender tones, "Let us be

quiet about it all just now, and we can arrange our plans together another time." (As the reader may have observed, Miss Duff was given to exaggeration.) 'Now, child, what do you think of that? and what will you do with your pretty kettle of fish now?'

'Do, aunt!' returned Fanny quietly. 'What should I do? Nothing, of course. This is no affair of mine. I know Norah well; and let me assure you, she is perfectly competent to look after her own affairs.'

'What!' almost screamed her aunt, 'do you mean to tell me you have no more idea of your duty in this matter—your duties as mistress of this house, as guardian of this young and giddy girl? Are you actually blind enough not to see that this Mr. Leicesterhire has proposed and been accepted by your friend? That they have agreed together to keep all their plans quiet; that no one shall know a thing about the matter but their two selves; that—that, in short, that—'

Excitement choked her utterance; she rose, strode once or twice up and down the room, sat down again, dashed her hand into her pocket, produced a peppermint, popped it into her mouth, and began sucking it in an excited manner, as her niece made answer, firmly and quietly, looking particularly dignified beside the irascible old lady:

'I think you forget, aunt, that had Mrs. Grant in any way doubted our powers of taking care of Norah she would never have intrusted her to us.'

'Her mother is probably a silly helpless woman—an invalid, is she not?—who never thought of the position in which her child would be placed. Pray who chaperons this girl at home?' inquired Miss Duff hotly.

'Mrs. Grant is by no means an invalid, only not strong, and without exception the nicest and most sensible woman I know. Norah has a married aunt also in London, and is most carefully chaperoned, I can assure you. Now let me give you my opinion of what you have told me. I think that probably you have made some mistake—overheard and repeated words which have really quite a different meaning from that which you have assigned to them. Norah is a girl *entirely* to be trusted. I do not think it in the least likely that things are as you suppose; but even if I did, I should still say, leave matters alone. Norah certainly knows, and will attend to, her own business best, and should she wish for advice, will undoubtedly ask for it; not till she does so would either my husband or I force it on her, I am sure of that.'

Miss Duff literally gasped, turned round on her chair so as to face her niece, and exclaimed,

'And you call yourself a Christian woman, yet will not stretch out so much as a finger to help this girl! I declare, if I knew her address, I would write and warn her mother myself.' (Fanny felt immensely relieved that she did not know it.) 'I seem to be the only person in this house who possesses one grain of common sense, one unselfish motive, except Mr. Lindsay. I have a good mind to ask his help in this matter. He seems at least to have a head on his shoulders.'

Fanny's patience was all but worn out; but remembering what she owed to a guest in her own house, answered,

'I beg, aunt, you will do no such thing. I assure you that even were things as you suppose, it could do no possible good, and might do an infinite amount of

harm. It is getting very late, and I am sure if you sit up any longer you will suffer for it to-morrow. If you really have anything more to say on this matter, I must ask you to address yourself to my husband, though I know he is sure to think as I do.'

There came a knock at the door at that moment, and Mr. Ross popped in his head, looking surprised and slightly amused as he caught sight of Miss Duff.

'What, you here, aunt Betsey?' he exclaimed. 'Nothing gone wrong with Bijou, I hope? I fancied he ate too good a supper.'

Miss Duff rose, walked majestically to the door, turned round as she reached it, and answered in her most oracular manner,

'Nothing gone wrong? O dear me, no, certainly not—at least, so your wife says. Only I shall desire ten minutes' conversation with you at your leisure, Edward Ross.' She opened the door as if to leave; then, once more facing round, raised her disengaged hand, pointing it at Ned, and saying solemnly, 'Remember your dead mother, Edward,' swept slowly out of the room.

Mr. Ross stood amazed at this remarkable demonstration. Could his aunt possibly have gone mad? or whence this mysterious allusion to his mother, when the poor lady had been sleeping peacefully in a quiet Lowland churchyard for more than ten years? Fanny was not quite sure whether to laugh or cry, as her husband turned to her for explanation. But as the ludicrous aspect of the affair struck her, and the remembrance of Miss Duff's figure during her final oration, with the large peppermint still stuck in her cheek, came across her mind, she ended by a hearty fit of laughing, and then proceeded to repeat the

conversation, asking him what he thought of it.

'What do I think of it, my darling?' he answered, smoothing his wife's pretty hair, as she lay back in her chair. 'I think it is as clear a case of eavesdropping as ever I came across; and if she speaks to me as she proposes, I shall be strongly tempted to tell her so. As for the rest, it is far more likely she overheard Norah refusing Leicester than accepting him, if there is any proposal in the question, which I much doubt. In the first place, it would have been a very stupid time to choose, when we were all so shortly to return.'

'Yes; but you know Percival is so very stupid,' interrupted his wife.

'So he is, my dear, I grant, and he may have been stupid enough to do this; but I doubt it. Norah never loses an opportunity of snubbing him; and the wonder to me is that he does not observe how little his attentions are desired. But he is dense enough for anything, and I fear will never rest till he does get a decided refusal. I admire Norah's wish to save him the pain of one; but I believe that even though he be madly enough in love with her just now, he is not the sort of man who would, after the first pang, perhaps, be much cut up about a refusal. I fancy he would be "on with the new love" almost before he was "off with the old."'

'What bothers me,' returned his wife, 'is that I am nearly sure, if the ground were clear, some one else would be only too ready to take his place, and with more chance of success. Mr. Lindsay's manner to Norah has entirely changed these last two days. I am certain Percival, or some one else, has been confiding that young man's plans to him. Ned, what

makes your aunt so dislike the idea of Norah accepting Percival! Has she anything against him?

'Not that I know of; in fact, I am sure she never heard much about him till she came here. But you know she objects to matrimony "on principle," as she says. Poor soul, there is some story I have heard, how she was cruelly jilted in her young days by a scamp of a man whom it is a mercy she escaped. This has sadly soured her temper, and she always seems to think it her duty to put a stop, as far as she can, to any love affair likely to lead to marriage.'

'Poor aunt Betsey! then there is some excuse for her,' remarked Fanny compassionately. 'But, Ned, do you think I can do anything to make the way easier for Mr. Lindsay?'

'I think, dear, you are most likely to help him by leaving things entirely alone. Some conclusion will probably soon be arrived at between Norah and that young goose Leicester. Besides, Geoffrey must remember for himself that "faint heart never won fair lady." Do not fear, all will come right in time.'

'Dear old Ned,' said his little wife, reaching up to kiss him, as she rose to prepare for bed, 'you have always such a large amount of faith. I wish I resembled you more in that particular.'

'One needs to practise it pretty often in this world of ours, if we are to keep quiet minds at all; in greater matters than in these also,' he added, returning the kiss with interest.

(*To be continued.*)

## AUTUMN BERRIES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ESTELLE.'

THE rose is dead, but we do not weep her;

We watch the deeper colour that glows  
On the leaves of the large Virginia creeper,  
And then we cease to mourn for the rose.

If the rose withers, the scarlet berry  
Reddens the hedges, the crimson leaf  
Shines like a flame, and our hearts are merry:  
Summer is over, we feel no grief.

We birds sing on in the city's centre,  
Or London garden, as when the rays  
Of the high sun through the streets would enter,  
For now comes the shade of the autumn days.  
And, O, the scarlet berry is hiding  
Miles away from the London square;  
The winds of the early night brought the tiding,  
And we will seek it, for we know where.

Sometimes we drop a little gray feather  
Into the throngs of the crowded street ;  
And sing our songs as we fly together,  
And dream of the berry, round and sweet.  
Sometimes above the roofs of the city  
We flit from the tree and the parapet,  
And look at the hurrying crowds with pity,  
And the long dull toil that their fate has set.

Our lessons are lighter : we learn to cover  
The fledgelings rocking on yonder bough  
We teach them to sway, to twitter, to hover,  
To sing in the swing of the wind's soft sough.  
I am a sparrow, my neighbour a martin ;  
We have our duties, our days fulfil,  
Deeds that our short bright lives take part in,  
We live as if it were summer still.

For, O, the autumn berries are peeping,  
Looking for us as we look for them ;  
The russet leaves hold them safe in their keeping,  
They crown the woods as a diadem.  
What though the gold laburnum tosses  
No more tassels for us this year ?  
We cannot grieve for our summer losses,  
Because the autumn berries are here.

I saw our portraits, once when bitter  
And brooding winter clung as a shroud  
To the snowy earth, and the delicate twitter  
We uttered was quite unheard by the crowd.  
There were our portraits ! The hospital cherished  
A picture of birds, and a scarlet prize  
Of the berries we love. We were almost perished :  
The sight of the berries rejoiced our eyes.

White hand, weak hand, we wished you were stronger,  
Throwing us crumbs on the window-ledge ;  
And we pecked, and prayed that a little longer  
Our favourites might deck the leafless hedge.  
Afterwards, and in the mid of the summer,  
We clustered near to the hospital-wall ;  
Alas, in that bed reposed a new comer,  
Deaf to our friendly chirruping call !

Still, though the sunshine makes way for embers,  
Through the wind's sigh we can hear the charm  
Of all that is past, and my heart remembers  
That poor patient's thin outstretched arm.  
Through the rain and the mist we hearken,  
The martin and I, to that tale of a deed  
So tender ; the year must eternally darken,  
Ere we forget his help in our need.

E. M. H.



## THE GRASP OF A WITHERED HAND.

An Irish Story.

### CHAPTER I.

Aw, bedad, sir, I don't mind tellin' yeh a bit. Shure now that we're safe out av our thrubble it's only too glad I am t' tell th' story t' any wan that'll jist let iviry wan know that me good husband, Pat Cassidy, nivir had act or part in th' murder av his ould uncle Tim—God rest his sowl!—this fine Christmas-eve; for it's he that wasn't th' bad soart!

Well, sir, me an' Pat was coor-tin'—jist pullin' a coard, as th' sayin' is—for close an' two year. Not that he sed much t' me for a long time; but shure, sir, usen't I t' see th' heart in his face whin he'd meet me in th' chapel-yard after mass av a Sunda', or at fair or market, or whin we'd sit discoorsin' anundher a hedge av a Sunda' evenin'! He was a fine sthrappin'-lookin' boy, wid th' best behaviour av any wan ivir I met; but shure, sir, he'll be in in a minnit; he's only jist gettin' a creel av turf from th' stack.

It's jist about three years ago sence Pat asked me av I'd marry him. Av coorse no dacint girl cud say she would all at wanst; that 'ud be a disgrace t' her. So I kept quillin' up a bit av me aporn as we war sittin' anundher th' hedge that Sunda' evenin', an' th' sorra word I sed. An', bedad, I don't mind tellin' yeh, sir, that I don't think I cud say a word wid th' joy, for I loved Pat,—well, sir, no, not as well as I love him now that he's me good husband; but I loved

him as well as any girl cud love any boy before she's marrid t' him.

'Mary Rooney,' sez he,—shure it's well I rimimber iviry word he sed; an' throth I cud hardly hear his voice,—'faith it's th' brakin's o' me heart yeh are intirely! I'm that fond av yeh, Mary, that I'd live an' th' clippins o' tin wid yeh, sooner nor in a slated house wid any wan else.'

Well, bedad, I knewn Pat was in airnest, an' it's no matter what I sed meself now; anyhow, we agreed that as soon as it was conveynant that Pat was t' spake t' th' priest. I don't know whether or not yeh know it, sir, but Pat's people war all dead, an' he was an orfin, an' he always lived wid his ould uncle, Tim Sullivan. He was allaways called ould 'Tim the Smaddherer,' bekase he used t' whitewash an' t' do jobs av plashterin' all through th' country. Aw, but it's he was the miserly ould chap! Afther a while he was near bein' kilt wan day, be raison av an ould wall that he was plashterin' up givin' way an' fallin' on him. He was near dyin', so he was. An thin whin Docthor Crean sed he was as well as ivir he cud be, what d'ye think, sir, but it was found out that poor ould Tim's right hand an' arm was no use t' him at all; an' there they used to hang for all th' world as dead an' as withered as av he got a fairy blast.

'Mary,' sez Pat t' me wan day, 'd'ye know I'm onaisy about me

uncle Tim? He has such a quare look in his face sometimes, jist as though he was hidin' somethin' from me, or thinkin' somethin' quare.'

'Throth, Pat,' sez I, 'me mother sed th' same thing last Sunda' whin we saw him.'

'Did she now?' he sez, quite glad-like.

'Ay,' sez I; 'an' d'ye know me mother says she thinks yer uncle must have some money saved somewhere, an' that he's afeard av bein' robbed av it now that he's not able t' use his right hand an' arm, av any wan was t' come t' thry and take it from him.'

Pat looked at me, an' thin he gives a smile, an' he sez in his own quare way,

'Well, now, Mary alannah, I don't say but what yer mother's as cute as a pancake; but shure what'd me uncle Tim be thryin' t' hide anythin' from me for?'

'I don't know, Pat; but yeh know he was allaways quare,' sez I.

Well, sir, to make a long story short, shure poor ould Tim Sullivan got quarer an' quarer, an' at last Pat spoke t' Father Mulcahy about it, an' asked his advice.

'Lave yer uncle t' me, Pat,' sez Father Mulcahy. 'I'll soon find out what's throublin' him. I know a good dale, but it's undher sale av confession; but I'll spake t' yer uncle Tim, an' we'll aise his mind betchune uz.'

Three or four days afther, I was sittin' in th' door, doin' a little bit av sewin', whin who comes along be Dogherty's boreen but Pat? I seen he was in a great hurry, an' I got up an' wint t' meet him. His eyes was dancin' out av his head, an' he sez in a whisper,

'Whisht, Mary acushla! Shure it's a made man I am, an' a proud woman you ought t' be this day!'

He looked such a fine handsome boy that I don't deny I did feel a proud girl; but I didn't tell him that, av coorse.

'Arrab, tell me what it's all about, Pat,' sez I.

'Just this,' he sez, still in a whisper, as av he was afeard av anywan listenin'. 'Father Mulcahy got th' soft side av me uncle Tim, an' what d'ye think, Mary alannah? but th' ould fella has been puttin' money by for many a year, an' he sez it's all for me, as I was like a good son t' him.'

Poor Pat got very red whin he tould me that, an' I sez—an shure it was only th' truth, not a word more nor less—

'So yeh war, Pat, as good a son as ivir brathed.'

'Well, th' say a good son makes a good husband, Mary,' sez he; 'anyhow let me tell yeh the rest av me story. What d'ye think but me uncle Tim has close upon a hundhred an' twinty pounds, an' he keeps it all in our own cabin?'

'Pat!' sez I; for who'd ivir think ould Tim Sullivan cud have such a fortune?

'Ay,' sez Pat, 'he has been hidin' it away iverywhere, an' now Father Mulcahy got him t' promise t' take it in t' Misther Bradley t' th' bank in Clonmel where they'd take care av it for him, an' there'd be no fear av him bein' robbed.'

'Bedad, it's a great day for uz, Pat,' sez I.

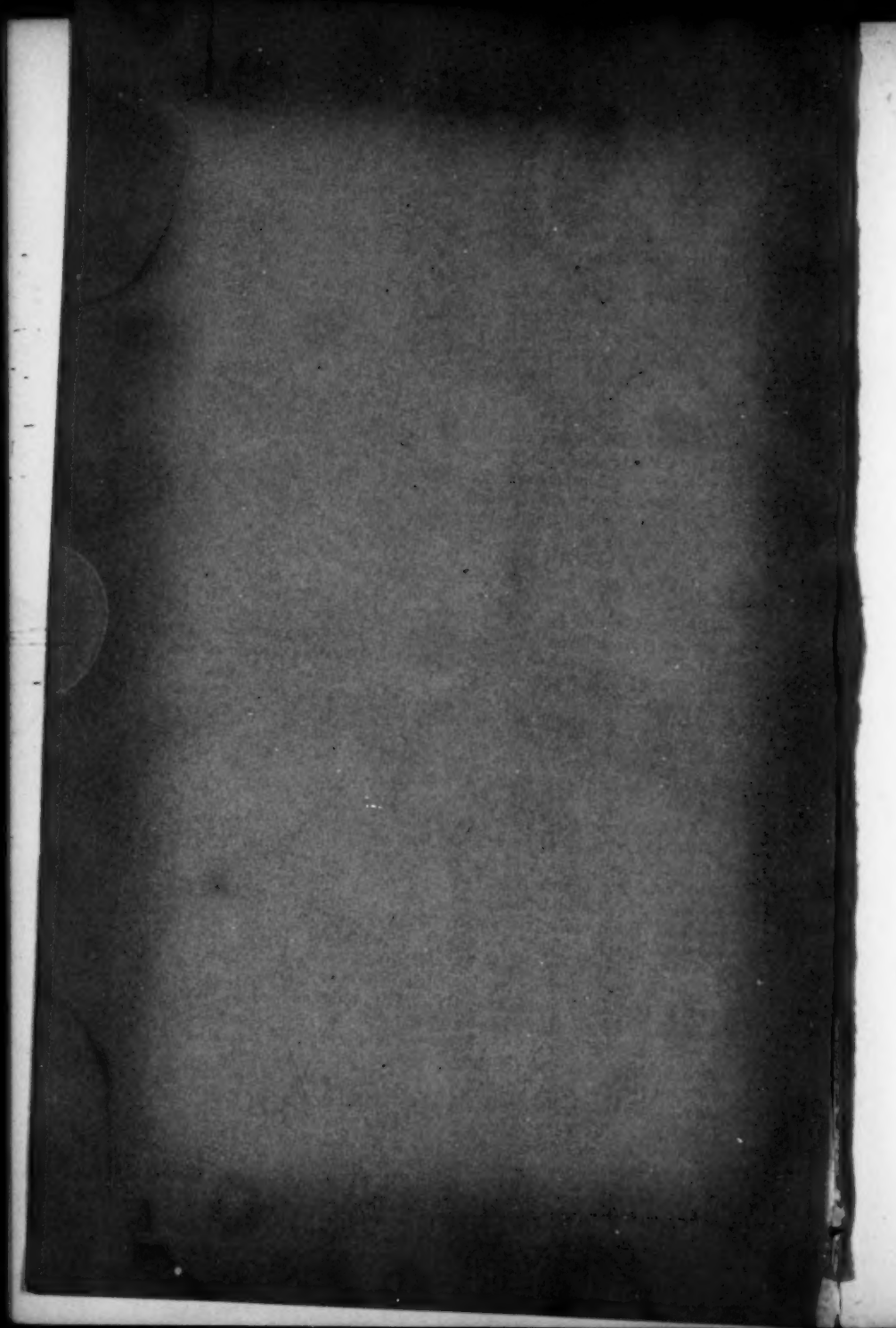
'It is, Mary,' he sez; 'an' now what I want yeh t' do is this: me uncle Tim wants t' go t' th' bank t'-morrow, so I can't go wid him, for I have t' go t' Bracken fair wid the two pigs, so I want yeh t' take me uncle into th' bank wid yeh.'

'Av coorse I will,' sez I; for throth I'd do more nor that for Pat.



A STRANGE BANKING TRANSACTION.

See 'The Grip of a Withered Hand.'



'Yeh see, bekase av his withered hand an' arm I don't like him t' go alone,' sez Pat; 'for it's lonely crassin' th' mountains; an' thin some blackgards might know he had th' bit av money, an' set an him.'

'Throth I'm not much use av th' did, Pat,' sez I, laughin'; an' Pat laughed too, for it was only in fun what he was sayin' about any wan doin' anythin' t' th' ould uncle.

Och! Wirra, wirra! Shure wasn't it th' black bitter mornin' that riz th' next day? Ould Tim kem down t' our cabin, dhrivin' th' low-backed car\* wid a chaff bed an' it, an' a blue quilt over that for me t' sit on.

'Well, God be wid yeh both!' sez me mother, as we war goin' away; an' she threwn an ould shoe afther uz for luck, an' it hit ould Tim Sullivan's withered hand.

He turned round quite quick, an' his face got red, an' he was goin' t' throw t' shoe back; only I cried out,

'Tim aghra, for th' love av God, an' don't throw back th' luck!'

'Arrah, whisht, girl,' he sez, in his quare angry way, 'why wouldn't I throw it back?'

'Bekase it's unlucky,' sez I; an' shure, sir, I cudn't say more nor that. But Tim Sullivan wasn't like other people.

"'Divil may care,'" sez he, 'as Punch sed whin he lost mass! I'll taiche yer mother t' make game of me dead hand—so I will!' an' wid that he threwer back th' ould shoe, an', och hone a-rie, shure not a lie I'm tellin' when I say he threwn back the luck too.

On we wint over the mountains,

\* A vehicle without springs, and with wheels formed of solid pieces of wood, the only kind of car which stands the wear and tear of the mountain roads.

for it was a good seven miles t' Clonmel. Ould Tim didn't spake much; an' sez I t' him,

'Arrah, Tim, what are yeh bringin' in the sack av piatees for, for it's not even the market-day?'

'Ax no quitions,' he sez, quite short, 'an' ye'll be tould no lies.'

'Throth,' sez I,—but, shure, I was only in fun all th' time,—'it's me own opinion, Tim, that yeh have all th' money in the sack, an' that it's not piatees at all.'

Ould Tim gives a jump, an' sez, 'Now look here, Mary Rooney, yer not goin' t' come over me that away. It's nothin' t' you where I keep th' money.'

Afther that th' sorra word more he sed until we kem t' th' bank in Bagwell-sthreet. It's a grand house, shure enough. So we wint up th' steps, ould Tim carryin' th' sack av piatees on his back. The very first person we met was Michael Neale, a third cousin av me mother's, an' there he was, dhressed like a gentleman, in a blue coat an' brass buttons, bekase he was th' sarvint at th' bank.

'Arrah, Mary Rooney,' sez he, 'it's glad I am t' see yeh; an' how are you, Tim, an' where are yeh goin' wid the piatees?'

'Never mind,' sez Tim. 'I want t' see the masther; I want Misther Bradley.'

'Haden't yeh betther lave th' piatees here,' sez Michael; an' shure he was right too.

But no, bedad! Ould Tim tuk no notice av what Michael sed; but in athrough th' glass doors he walked, an' me follyin' him.

'Young man,' sez ould Tim t' a gentleman in a glass case, 'where's yer masther?'

'Who?' sez he.

'Yer masther,' says Tim.

'I suppose yeh want Misther Bradley?' says he.

'Didn't I say so?' sez ould Tim, who had a short temper.

Misther Bradley kem out, an' he sez,

'O, so you're Timothy Sullivan, that Father Mulcahy was tellin' me about. Come in here.'

Well, we wint round be th' back av th' glass cases into the purtiest little parlour yeh ivir laid yer two eyes on; an' thin Tim tould th' gentleman that he wanted t' put his hunderd an' twenty pounds in th' bank.

'We'll take th' hoighth av good care av it for yeh,' sez Misther Bradley, that was as pleasant-spoken a gentleman as ye'd meet. 'An' yer quite right to take Father Mulcahy's advice, and t' put it in the Bank av Ireland.'

'I'll let yeh take care av it,' sez ould Tim, houldin' out th' sack av piatees, 'av ye'll just keep th' money the way I give it t' you.'

Misther Bradley stan's up an' looks across the table.

'Why, thin,' sez he, in a wondherin' voice, 'an' have yeh th' full av that sack av money, me good man? It must be all in coppers!'

'Th' divil a copper!' sez ould Tim, quite smart. 'It's all in goold.'

'A sack av goold!' sez I. 'Why, Tim, shure it's piatees yeh have in that sack.'

'Now wimmin is too fond av talkin',' sez Tim. 'See here, sur; an' he opens th' sack, an' there was nothin' t' be seen but piatees.

'Let's hear all about it,' sez Misther Bradley, an' throth I think I seen a laugh in his eyes. But who cud help it? For whin I tell yeh all, ye'll say it was no wondher, sir, that I couldn't help laughin' meself.

## CHAPTER II.

'Ay!' sez ould Tim Sullivan, lookin' at me, 'yeh may laugh av yeh like, me dacint girsha. But I wasn't goin' t' be such a fool as t' tell yeh what was in th' sack whin we war comin' down th' mountains. Who did I know might be listenin' t'?

'Let us come t' business,' sez Misther Bradley. 'Where's the money you want to put into the bank?'

'Here, sir; an' ould Tim takes up a fine piatee—a Scotch Down—an' out av it he takes a sovereign.

'Well, that bates!' sez I.

'Bedad, Tim,' sez Misther Bradley, an' he thryin' t' keep down th' laughin', 'yeh have a way av yer own av keepin' yer money safe. That's not th' way th' Bank av Ireland keeps its money.'

'Well, sir, it's about that I want t' spake,' sez Tim. 'Yeh see, sir, there's a hunderd an' twenty goold sovereigns there in that sack, an' iviry wan av thim is hid sep'rate in a piatee. It's th' way I kep thim this many a year; an' whin th' piatees begins t' get bad, thin I change thim, and put the sovereigns into fresh piatees. Now, sir, I don't mind a bit lavin' th' money wid yeh, av ye'll keep it jist as it is, an' I'll come reg'lar an' keep an eye after it meself, an' change th' piatees, not t' give yeh th' thrubble av doin' it.'

'Me good man,' sez Misther Bradley, 'yeh make a great mistake! Shure we cudn't take yer money in that way. Yeh must thrust the bank—shure yeh don't think th' Bank av Ireland 'ud rob yeh av it?'

'Now see here, sir,' sez Tim Sullivan. 'I don't mane no offence in life; but yeh know, sir, that whin people has th' handlin' av money it often sticks to their fingers.'



'Look here, Sullivan,' sez Misther Bradley. 'Only I know it's ignorance makes you speak so, I'd be angry with you.'

'No, sir, I'm not as ignorant as yeh think,' sez Tim, 'an' I'll only lave me money wid yeh in th' way I say; so that I can come down any day an' see that it's not touched. An' I'll change th' piatees meself, not to give yeh th' thrubble, sir.'

Well, me jewil, shure there was great talk betchune ould Tim Sullivan an' Misther Bradley. Th' gintleman sed a lot that I didn't undherstand about intherest, whativir that is, an' it's me own opinion that Tim didn't undherstand it either; an' th' long an' th' short av it all was, that Tim wouldn't lave the money in th' Bank av Ireland, onless he was let keep it safe in th' piatees, an' come an' look at it whiniver he liked.

'Go out, Mary,' sez Tim t' me, 'an' look afther th' car. We must be gettin' home afore nightfall.'

So out I wint, an' found th' horse stanin' quite quiet; an' there was Michael Neale at th' top av th' steps, an' shure I cndn't help tellin' him av th' foolishness av ould Tim Sullivan.

'Arrah no, Mary!' sez Michael; 'shure, yer not in airnest?'

'Bedad, I am,' sez I; 'an' shure here we're goin' home agin wid Tim's hundhered an' twinty sovereigns stuck in th' sack av piatees.'

'Throth, he's th' quare Tim,' sez Michael. 'Yez'll hardly be home afore dark.'

'Bedad, we won't,' sez I; 'for th' crows comes home airly just now.'

'Ay, faith; but here's ould Tim.'

'Don't tell him I towld yeh,' sez I, in a whisper, knowin' th' ould fella's quareness.

An' thin, shure, aff we wint again across th' mountain road. It was about a week afore Christmas, an' there was a little snow an' ice an th' roads that med it hard for th' baste. The crathur was tired too, so that it was dark night afore we kem t' th' pass av Creevagh, just a mile an' a half from me mother's.

'Tim,' sez I, 'I'm awful cowlid.'

'It's a hard night,' sez he.

An' so it was; it was freezin' fit t' kill any wan, an' th' stars was sparklin' up in th' sky.

'D'ye know, Tim,' sez I, 'I'm that cramped an' cowlid here sittin' an th' car, that I think I'll get down an' walk th' rest av th' way home.'

'Jist as yeh like,' sez he.

'Come in an' have a cup av tay or a taste av whisky t' keep th' life in yeh, whin yer passin',' sez I.

'Thank yeh kindly, Mary; so I will,' sez he.

Well, off I wint, an', bedad, I soon got fine an' warm, whin all av a suddint I missed me footin' an th' ice, an' down I kem. Me hands was all scraped, an' a sharp stone ran right into me left hand.

Whin I got home I saw I was all bleedin', but I put a cobweb an' a bit av a rag an it, an' didn't mind it a bit.

Afther a while who comes up but Pat. I towld him all about what happened, an', shure, he was angry at first, an' thin he laughed. We got th' tay ready, an' some beautiful griddle-cakes an' fresh butther, an' we war waitin' for ould Tim Sullivan, for it was apast th' time for him t' come.

'I don't hear th' car,' sez Pat, goin' t' th' doore an' listenin', 'an' me uncle ought t' be here by this.'

We waited another while, an' thin sez Pat,

'Bedad, I'm gettin' onaisy! Maybe th' horse fell an th' ice; th' roads is so slippy, an' me uncle

hasn't th' strength t' help it up. I'll go down by the Creevagh Pass.'

'Ay, do, Pat,' sez me mother; an' as soon as he wint out she sez t' me,

'Throth, Mary alannah, I didn't like ould Tim throwin' back his luck this mornin'; people may laugh, but no good cud come from doin' such a thing. Why, even didn't somethin' happen t' yerself? Yeh fell an' cut yer hands.'

'Ay, faith, mother,' sez I, an' me hands war smartenin' me; 'but shure yeh don't think anythin' happened t' ould Tim Sullivan?'

'Throth, I dunno,' she sez; 'but shure he ought t' be here now.'

I don't know why it was, but I cudn't rest aisy afther me mother sayin' that; an' I cudn't take a mouthful av tay, or a bit av th' griddle-cake, but kep goin' backwards an' forrards t' th' doore. It was freezin' hard, an' there wasn't a breath av air, nor a sound anywhere; an' just as I was comin' away from th' doore wan time, I thought I heerd some wan runnin' up th' boreen.

I was right too. The steps kem nearer an' nearer, an' in a few minnits who comes runnin' up but Pat, an' ketchin' houl't av me he comes into th' kitchen.

'For th' love o' God, what's th' matter?' sez me mother; an' I gev a schreech, for Pat's face was as white as th' snow outside, an' his eyes burnin' like two coals, an' there was blood on th' front av his shirt, an' on his hands, an' on the rest av his clothes.

'Pat! Pat darlint!' sez I, 'an' what's this for at all, at all?'

'Me uncle Tim,' he sez, in a hoarse soart av a voice—'he's kilt there beyant near th' Creevagh Pass, an' some wan ran away wid th' sack wid th' money in it.'

'Kilt!' sez' me mother. 'O Pat, what'll we do?'

'I'm goin' t' run over t' Paddy Closkey's, t' ask him an' th' boys t' come,' sez Pat, runnin' t' th' doore as he was apakin'; 'an' you, Mary, run aff for Father Mulcahy, an' he'll bring me poor uncle up here, Mrs. Rooney.'

Av coorse that was all settled, an' me mother got th' bed in th' room ready, an' Pat an' th' Closkeys, th' father an' th' three sons, wint aff t' th' Creevagh Pass for poor ould Tim, an' meself set aff t' th' chapel-house for Father Mulcahy.

'Now, me girl,' sez Father Mulcahy, as we war comin' along over th' mountain road, 'tell me all about this terrible affair.'

Shure, thin, sir, I towld his rivirence all about me goin' wid poor ould Tim t' th' bank, an' how he wouldn't lave th' money; an' thin about how I was so cowl'd on th' way home, an' got down an' walked th' rest av th' way; an' av how Pat kem in an' thin wint down t' th' Creevagh Pass, an' kem back t' say his uncle was there, kilt intirely.

'It's a bad business, Mary *ma gra gal*,' sez Father Mulcahy, an' just thin we kem t' th' doore.

There was poor ould Tim Sullivan lyin' an' th' bed in th' room, jist as th' boys carried him up. Shure any wan cud see it was death was on his face. Father Mulcahy wint over an' tuk hould av his hand for a minnit, an' looked very sharp into his face, an' thin he turned away, an' sez he t' me mother quite nice an' solemn-like:

'Biddy Rooney, call in some av th' nabours, an' we'll say a mass for th' repose av his sowl.'

Thin we all knewn for sartin that poor ould Tim Sullivan was dead. He was th' awfulest sight, sir, yeh ivir seen. Shure his

head was reglar battered in wid stones.

'Now, me good people,' sez Father Mulcahy after mass, an' me mother an' me was sayin' our bades, 'this is a very sarious an' dhreadful affair, an' some wan av yer ought to go an' tell the polis at wanst.'

'I'm goin', yer rivirence,' sez Pat, 'as soon as I see yer rivirence home across the mountain.'

So aff Pat set, sir, an' in a few hours who comes but a whole lot av polis, an' a docther; an' some av th' polis stayed all night, and nivir lost sight av poor ould Tim, an' thin, as I suppose yeh know, sir, there was th' inquist th' next day.

Well, sir, at th' inquist they cud only find out that poor ould Tim was batthered t' death wid stones on the head, but th' cud say no more; so then Mither Reilly, the crowner, sed that 'Timothy Sullivan met wid his death athrough his head bein' batthered wid stones, an' want av further ividence.'

### CHAPTER III.

BUT, sir dear, shure th' quarest part av the whole thing was that afther poor ould Tim Sullivan was dead, what d'ye think but in his poor withered hand, that for th' many's th' day cudn't hould a rush—it was that wake—well, in his hand was tight grasped a good big bit av some quare soart av gray cloth!

'It's wondherful t' think about,' sez Father Mulcahy, whin the docthor an' the crowner war talkin' about it.

'It was jist th' terror an' th' strength av the death-struggle that did it,' sez Docthor Crean; 'he was in such a desperate way

that it even put life into th' withered hand.'

Well, sir, poor ould Tim Sullivan was waked in me mother's cabin, an' he had a grand funeral. All the nabours from far an' near kem t' it, an' Pat an' me thought it was very nice an' respectful av thim too. So whin we war comin' home me mother axed Pat t' come wid us an' t' have his tay. Th' poor boy was very down in himself. It wasn't bad enough to lose his uncle that was always good to him, as quare as he was; but, sir dear, it was terrible hard t' lose th' bit av money too, for nayther sight nor light av it cud we git.

'Never mind, Pat,' sez I, thryin' t' comfort the poor boy; 'never mind, acushla! Shure wouldn't it be worse nor th' dirty money av we lost wan another?' An' me face turned as red as a turkey-cock whin I sed such a bowld thing t' th' boy that was coortin' me; but it was jist me heart said it, I cudn't help meself.

'Yer right, Mary avourneen, yer right, acushla!' he sez. 'But this I'm detarmined on, Mary: I'll nivir rest antil I fix me poor uncle's Tim's murther on some wan.'

Well, jist as Pat sed that, we heerd some thrampin', an' in walked some av th' polis. The sergeant walked over t' Pat, an' sez he,

'Patrick Dionysius Cassidy, in the Queen's name I arrest you for being concerned in the murder of Timothy Sullivan.'

Pat jumped up; but before he cud say wan word, th' policeman had th' handcuffs on him.

I thought I'd have died wid th' shame an' th' fright, sir. I felt iviry dhrop av blood goin' back t' me heart, an' me head wint intirely whin th' sergeant kem over t' me an' sed,

'Mary Josephine Rooney, in the Queen's name I arrest you for

being concerned in the murder of Timothy Sullivan.'

Me poor mother nearly wint mad, sir. But off we war tuk, an' that night we war lodged in Clonmel jail.

Och, weirasthrú! but it was th' cruel day for uz both! I cudn't hear anythin' about poor Pat, an' he cudn't hear anythin' about me. An' thin, sir, as I suppose yeh know, we war brought up for thrial one day, an' th' foolishhest things yeh ivir heerd was sed about th' two av uz. Shure th' sed, sur, that bekase me hand was all bleedin'—an' shure yeh know it was from the fall I got—that it was bekase I helped Pat—an' he as innocent as a baby, sir!—t' murder poor ould Tim Sullivan that we might get th' money he had hid in th' sack av piatees!

I don't deny, sir, but that what all thim lawyer gintlemin sed was very like jist as av it cud all have happened. For shure enough there was blood an both Pat's clothes an' mine; but that was from his thryin' t' rise his uncle whin he found him lyin' kilt in th' snow at th' Creevagh Pass; an' an my clothes too from th' cuts an me hand. An' thin Misther Bradleysed I was wid poor ould Tim, an' knewn all about th' money in th' piatees, an' iviry wan knewn me an' Pat was goin' t' be married; so all th' lawyers an' gintlemin put wan thing an' another together, an'—och! va! shure I thought I'd ha' died whin I heerd it—me an' me poor Pat was aich give twenty year penal sarvitute.

There was jist wan thing I always feel glad about, sir, an' that is, that I got th' same punishment as me poor Pat. I cudn't bear t' think that he'd be sufferin' an' me free. But we both had wan thing that med us look forward t' th' long time whin we'd get out av prison, an' that was, that both

me an' Pat knewn it was all a mistake, an' that he cud thrust me, an' me him, jist th' same at th' ind av th' time.

So th' sorry weary months wint on, an' it seems that wan day Misther Barron av Barronstown was in th' polis-station. Misther Barron was a magistrate in th' county, an' a nice free-spoken gintleman. An' it's he was th' quare funny gintleman too! Whin he was young he used t' be away in furrin' parts antil he kem into th' property whin his father died.

An' wan day he was in the polis-station, an' he was lookin' at some things that th' polis had hung up in their barrack-room; an' what d'ye think, but there was th' bit av curious gray cloth that was found tight in poor ould Tim Sullivan's hand th' very night he was murdered. Misther Barron felt it, an' he looked at it very airmest.

'Will yeh tell me,' sez he, 'where yeh got that?'

So thin th' sergeant tould him all about poor ould Tim, an' about Pat an' me; an', bedad, tould him th' whole story av th' thrial from beginnin' t' end.

'But, sir,' sez th' sergeant, 'we nivir cud get any clue about that bit av cloth.'

'I can give you a clue,' sez Misther Barron. 'It's a piece tore out av a mornin' coat I had made from some stuff I brought wid me from th' aist.'

'Go on, sir,' sez th' sergeant; 'for, sir, we're not quite sure that we hit on th' right people whin we tuk up Mary Rooney an' Pat Cassidy; but yeh see, sir, we had t' do somethin' for th' credit av the force, an' we were able t' make out a very good case agin thim.'

'Stop!' sez Misther Barron; 'shure I rimember it now. That coat, whin it was wore out, I gave to an old sarvint av mine.'

'Who was he, sir?'

'His name was Michael Neale,' sez Mither Barron. 'He left me whin I wint abroad two years ago, an' I got him a situation wid Mither Bradley in th' Bank av Ireland.'

So, sir, jist as th' all did wid poor Pat an' me, th' all began puttin' two and two t'gether about Michael Neale; an' wan day th' tuk him up, an' tuk all his clothes—an' not a lie I'm tellin' yeh, sir, whin I say that it was found out that th' piece av cloth that was found in the grasp av poor ould Tim Sullivan's withered hand fitted in exact t' where it was tore from a coat med av' the same kind av cloth that was found among Michael Neale's clothes.

Shurely, sir, it was a wondherful time, an' a wondherful thing altogether. An' thin, shure I rimimbered that I towld Michael Neale on th' bank-steps all about poor ould Tim havin' th' sove-reigns in th' piatees. An' wan thing an' another kem out; an' how Michael had got a frind av his t' buy a small farm for him; an' so, wid wan thing an' another, Michael Neale, t' make a long story short, saw there was no use in denyin' it any longer, an' he confessed that it was him that mardthered poor ould Tim Sullivan.

Och, sir, shure it was worth bein' in prison, an' goin' athrough all th' thrubble for t' see how glad th' nabours war t' see me an' Pat, as soon as we war let out. Throth, our hearts comes up in our mouths whin we think av all the kind words was sed about us! An' it's all the gintlemen that was kind—Mither Barron an' Mither Bradley an' all av thim. Shure betchune thim all th' bought this little farm for uz, where we're as happy as th' day's long.

Yes, sir, it was a terrible day th' day that Michael Neale was hanged. Nayther me nor Pat 'ud go to Clonmel that mornin', though there was plenty that asked uz t' go: an iviry night me and Pat sez a prayer for th' repose av Michael Neale's misfortunate sowl.

An' now, sir, that's th' whole story. But I hear Pat's voice, sir, an' here he is! He's as good as he's good-lookin', sir; an av yeh ask him anythin' about it, he'll jist say:

'The good God always defends th' right. He knewn Mary an' me was innocent; an' t' show that He has the power t' do ivirythin', He put power even into the Grasp of a Withered Hand!'

Bannacht Ladth! Sir, maybe we'll meet agin'.

## THE MYSTERY IN PALACE GARDENS.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

'It never occurred to you, I suppose,' said Doctor Dilton a week later, once again addressing his patient of twenty odd years previously, 'to make inquiries at the house to which your wife's letters were addressed?'

'No,' was the answer. 'I do not think after such a length of time much could be ascertained from that quarter.'

Doctor Dilton looked at him thoughtfully and shook his head.

'You do not want to know the story, as I said before,' he remarked.

'I do wish to know it,' said Mr. Palthorpe; 'but candidly, I feel incompetent to follow the details which seem necessary. My solicitors wanted to employ a detective; but I could not bear the idea of baring the trouble of my life to a man of that kind.'

'I can understand your feelings,' was the reply. 'But just to show you how easily the matter might be unravelled if gone about in a proper manner, I may tell you I got the address from Miss Aggles and went to the house. Present tenant had been in it only five years; so there was nothing to do but try to find out the former occupier. Miss Aggles, if she ever knew, had forgotten her name; so I managed to obtain a sight of an old directory, and found she was a Mrs. Grimes. I traced her to Pentonville, and ascertained after five minutes'

conversation that all letters which came to her addressed to Mrs. Palthorpe were readressed to the care of *Mrs. Hay*, the Poplars, Wandsworth-road.'

Mr. Palthorpe started; the blood rushed into his face one moment, and then receding, left him pale as death; but he did not utter a word.

'You begin to see I was right,' said the doctor.

'There may have been a Mrs. Hay,' observed the unhappy man hesitatingly.

'Or there may not,' finished the doctor; 'at all events, if there were it is extremely unlikely your wife was acquainted with her. Having taken the matter in hand—Miss Aggles urged me to do so, I ought to tell you—I thought I would see it out; and I therefore went to the Poplars, which is to let, by the way. It was more difficult to ascertain anything in that neighbourhood; but after a good deal of trouble I met a person, a nurseryman, who perfectly remembered a Mr. Hay living in the house, and directed me where to find a man that had worked for him as gardener. His description of Mr. Hay answered precisely to that of our Stratford friend; and if he had drawn your wife's portrait in oils, he could not have sketched a better likeness than he presented to me as that of Mrs. Hay.'

'If I could meet him, if I could only find him!' muttered Mr. Palthorpe huskily.

'I do not say now what I said



before, that if you were able to do that you would find her,' said the doctor; 'for from what I heard of the life they led, of her temper, of her imperious ways, it is most unlikely the connection lasted longer than the break-up at the Poplars, which occurred about the time she went to Ravelsmede. Very possibly what she told her aunt about her intended marriage was true; but then comes a puzzle as regards your child. Why should any man want another man's child?'

'It is all a mystery,' answered Mr. Palthorpe. 'Did you hear what Mr. Hay was?'

'Nothing more than that he had some business in the City, some business which kept him a good deal away from home. So far as I could gather, he did not live at the Poplars, only went backwards and forwards.'

'I will see it out now,' remarked Mr. Palthorpe; 'let what may come, I will see it out.'

'I think you ought,' was the answer, 'on every account,' and he wrung the hands of the man for whom he felt a sympathy to which he was incompetent to give expression—the man who, though he had so loyally staked 'all for love,' could not count the 'world well lost.'

Meantime there was a struggle going on in the mind of the master of Holyrood House which might well have moved the compassion even of an enemy.

In his repentance, as in his sin, the weakness which, unsuspected alike by himself and the world, was an integral part of his character entered so largely as to prevent his coming to any decision concerning the course he ought to adopt. Swayed hither and thither, now determining to answer the advertisement, again assuring himself no good purpose could be

served by reopening the old wound, inclining one moment to the belief Rachel need never know he was not her father, and the next remembering that any hour circumstances might arise which would necessitate confession, he passed the hours and the days and the nights in a state of unrest and misery a stronger mental organisation could not have supported.

Not so Lady Moffat. Having, as she believed, thrown suspicion off the track and stopped further inquiry, she recovered her health and spirits. Only one change was noticeable—she would not walk; no, not a step beyond the precincts of her own home. Whenever she wanted to go she went in a close carriage, with a thick veil tied down over her face. There had been times previously when, without any apparent cause, and, indeed, without actual cause, she elected to take the latter precaution; and her ladyship's 'vagaries,' as her servants called her changes of mind and temper, were so well understood in the household that no fresh freak was likely to attract attention. Even Miss Banks did not consider her latest fancy peculiar. That lady had always thought it strange Lady Moffat did not use her carriage more; and she felt by no means sorry for a change of tactics which enabled her to go everywhere she wished without, as she tersely put the matter, 'wetting the sole of her shoe.'

One other alteration, of which the world was not aware, came about. Though Lady Moffat's manner towards Rachel in public underwent little change—indeed the habit of snubbing her elder daughter had grown so confirmed she could not have broken herself of it—she was constantly seeking her society, trying to propitiate her, watching her face with anxiety.

'Dear papa,' said the girl one morning to Sir John, 'you can't think how kind mamma is to me often now. Some day, do you know, I even fancy she may get fond of me. What have I said? Have I hurt you, papa? I thought you would be pleased,' she asked, bewildered; for he was looking at her with eyes that held a sort of terror in their expression. Why should his wife suddenly change her tactics? What mystery lay underneath that advertisement? Who wanted tidings of the dead man's child? Was he standing in her light? Was it his duty at all hazards to say, 'This is Thomas Palthorpe's daughter; she is no kith or kin of mine'?

'I am glad, Rachel,' he answered after a second's pause; but he trembled so violently he had to lay down the paper-cutter he held in his hand. 'Anything which makes you happier—and then his voice died away, and he rose and walked towards the window, to hide the trouble in his face from her loving gaze.

'You are ill,' she said, 'or you are in some trouble rather; may I not know what it is? Has anything gone wrong about money? I have always felt this to be an unlucky sort of house.'

'My trouble would have found me in any house,' he replied, unclasping the arms she had wound around his neck. 'Don't cry, dear; it may all come right some day. It is nothing about money; would that it were! O, would to God it were!'

'Can't I help you, papa?' she asked. 'I am not of much use certainly; but I would do anything, anything on earth for you.'

'I believe you would, *now*,' he answered, laying an unintentional emphasis on the last word.

'Now!' she repeated; 'do you think I would not always?'

'You will have other ties some day,' said Sir John evasively.

'No other tie,' she answered firmly, though she blushed as she spoke, 'could separate me from you. Say you are sure of that, papa?'

'I am sure you think so, dear,' he replied; 'but O, Rachel, how can any of us say how we may feel, what we shall do, even an hour hence? We can answer for the present, which is ours; but we cannot answer for the future, nor for what we shall be or do or feel in it.'

She looked at him with sad tender wistfulness.

'I think I could answer for myself,' she said. 'Of course you know better than I; but yet—no, you don't know better about this, papa,' she added, suddenly flinging herself on his breast and bursting into tears. 'No time, no tie, no anything could change my love for you. If it ever comes to be tested you will see; yes, indeed, you will see.'

Ah, she did not know! How would it be if she ever did know? Sir John felt the very intensity of her affection weighing down his soul. Every word she spoke pierced him like a sword. His heart, his poor tortured heart, could bear no more; he put her gently from him, and without further word or look left the room.

As he did so Simonds advanced to say Mr. Woodham was in the library.

'He is sorry to call so early, Sir John, but wishes to speak to you particularly;' a statement which Mr. Woodham's first words confirmed.

'I have to apologise for intruding at such an untimely hour,' he began, stretching out his hand; 'but I am starting to-day for Florence, and I wanted to say something to you before I go. You must promise not to be very

indignant at what I am going to tell you,' he added, smiling a little nervously.

'Won't you sit down?' asked Sir John, taking a chair himself. His tone was cold and his manner constrained. 'Now, what is it?' and as he spoke those last words Mr. Woodham knew he was nerv- ing himself to meet some expected blow.

'Well, without beating about the bush,' said Mr. Woodham, feeling it better to plunge into the matter at once, 'I love your daughter.'

'Love—Rachel?' repeated Sir John, feeling that though this was not precisely the 'something' he had expected at the moment, it served equally well to prove the beginning of the end was at hand.

'I know I am not in any worldly respect—'

'Stop a moment, please,' inter- rupted Sir John, placing his elbow on the table, and shading his eyes with one hand, while he raised his other with a gesture of en- treaty.

Mr. Woodham paused. He remained perfectly silent for a few minutes, which seemed to both men almost as the length of hours. Then Sir John, uncover- ing his face and revealing once again that gray pallor the clergy- man had noticed before, said quietly,

'I beg your pardon; pray pro- ceed.'

'If you are ill, some other time. You would, perhaps, prefer—' hesitated Mr. Woodham.

'I am not ill—in body,' was the reply; 'and as for time, there is none like time present. You were saying—'

'That in a worldly point of view I am aware my proposals must seem to you in every respect undesirable. But I have received

this morning a telegram which may materially alter my position; and I therefore want to obtain a conditional promise from you that if hereafter circumstances should enable me to offer your daughter such a home as—'

'Tell me exactly what you mean,' said Sir John, as he, usually ready enough of speech, paused and hesitated.

'Well, I scarcely like to say what I do mean,' answered Mr. Woodham, confused; 'and yet I cannot leave England without speaking to you. The telegram from Florence requests me in- stantly to go to my cousin, who is dangerously ill. If he—'

'If he died, you would be Lord Chesunt?' suggested Sir John, who was now by far the more self- possessed of the two.

'I should be in a position to maintain a wife, which I am not now,' amended the clergyman, vexed a little at having his own ideas presented in such hard colours before him. 'I do not want him to die. I never expect- ed to step into his shoes. I never intended to ask you just yet for your daughter's hand; but as mat- ters stand I thought—since many things may happen during my ab- sence—that I would tell you I feel an affection for Rachel I never felt for any woman before, and that I well know I never can feel for any woman again, and ask your con- sent to trying to win a favourable answer from her in the future should it so chance that—that—'

'I understand,' said Sir John; and then he relapsed into silence.

'I do not desire to bind you by any promise, even a condi- tional one,' Mr. Woodham was beginning. 'Now that you know my feelings and wishes—'

'I will answer you directly,' interrupted Sir John; and, rising, he walked over to the book-

shelves and stood looking at nothing for about the space of time in which one might have slowly counted twenty.

Then he came back and resumed his seat. Stretching his hands, which were tightly clasped, over the table, he began speaking in a low voice and in a dull monotone which was sadly impressive.

'Rich or poor, Mr. Woodham, a curate or a lord, you are, of all men, the man I would desire to see Rachel's husband. If she were to become your wife, I should prefer you, however, as you are; for I doubt if she would be so happy as a great lady as she might find herself in a humbler walk of life. She has no high ideas; she is simple in her tastes. But why do I talk this way? She can never be your wife—never.'

'Not be my wife? For what reason?'

'Because you will not marry her.'

'I will not marry her?' again repeated Mr. Woodham.

'No; not when you have heard what I have to say. You remember the other night I told you there was a person I knew troubled in mind; that he sought advice; that he wanted you to know his secret. That man was myself; and Sir John, having made this leap, stopped suddenly, as if frightened, and drew a long gasping breath.

'I felt sure of it,' murmured Mr. Woodham to himself.

'It is a story,' went on Sir John, 'of sin and sorrow—of sin and sorrow; but you must hear it.'

'No,' answered Mr. Woodham, all his former hesitation, all his perplexed uncertainty, disappearing in a moment—'no, I must *not* hear it—at least, not now, not till I am your daughter's husband.

If hereafter you will give her to me, I will receive your gift as the greatest man could bestow. Whatever her birth may be, whatever of sin and sorrow your life holds, can make no difference to me. Only give her to me with her own free full consent. Let her come to me with her sweet shy face, and put her hand in mine, and vow before God's altar to be my true and loving wife; and then, Sir John, no matter what your trouble is, I will share it with a son's true heart, help you if I can, and bear whatever part of the burden needs to fall upon me unrepiningly. I say this from the depths of my soul, as truly and sincerely as I hope you will have help from the Source of all help, that the good Lord may have mercy and pity upon you.'

'Amen,' said Sir John, in a broken whisper. 'Amen.'

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### IN SIR JOHN'S OFFICE.

SIR JOHN MOFFAT and Mr. Woodham left Holyrood House together, and went down Palace Gardens, talking as they walked.

Sir John was going into the City, and Mr. Woodham said he would accompany him for a short way. The hour chanced to be much later than that the owner of Mr. Seaton's old residence usually started for town; but he had not, on this morning, any particular business requiring his presence at the office, and, accordingly, the pair turned in between the red-brick pillars, which modestly indicate the abode of Royalty, and strolled leisurely past the red-brick palace, that has such a charming look of home about it, and straight on by the

broad walk to that piece of water which bears so strong a resemblance to another piece of water in the avenue at Bushey Park.

As they walked under the trees, that, if power of speech were given them, could tell so many a story of human wrong and human woe, Mr. Woodham eager, though thoughtful, Sir John *distract* and melancholy beyond his wont, the same person the clergyman had jostled in the darkness met both gentlemen face to face.

He did not know either, and had actually passed them by, when Sir John, in answer to some remark of his companion, happened to speak.

Instantly the stranger in London paused, startled. They were moving from him; but he turned upon his step and followed them, not near enough to overhear what they were saying, but sufficiently close to keep them well in sight.

On Sir John paced, in his quiet measured way, totally unconscious that any one was dogging him. A policeman touched his hat to the 'worthy knight,' as he chanced to be called by many City people; but the stranger did not pause to make any inquiries. He meant to satisfy his own mind; to ascertain if he had been attracted by aught more than a mere trick of fancy. If it were the man! O Lord! if after all these many years he had found him at last! What then? He gasped almost as he asked himself involuntarily this question; but he answered it instantly: then he would know for certain. If this were the man, he should learn, without a doubt, whether he held the clue of his wife's disappearance.

Supposing he had nothing to do with it or her? So much the better for him. Supposing Doctor

Dilton right? He would hunt him down, let him be as rich as he might—as highly considered as man could be; he would strip off the mask, and expose him to the world as a cheat, a hypocrite, and a villain.

The more he looked at the figure preceding him, so stiff and solemn in its movements, with so little of ease in limb or action—at the profile, changed and aged though it was—the more certain he felt that he beheld the person so long looked for, so constantly thought of, in the flesh at last.

But he did not mean to make any mistake; he intended to be sure before he took even so much of action as was involved in speech.

In his heart he felt certain that there, walking before him, was the man who had stayed his feeble feet stumbling across the threshold of the valley of the shadow, who had, with his strong arm, supported him back to life, who had acted the part of the Good Samaritan to one worsted in the battle of existence.

Had it all been acting, all a premeditated plan? The eyes that were so like Rachel's fastened themselves upon the gray hair, the wan face, the weary expression, and, in spite of themselves, softened as they looked.

More in keeping with the widest and most silent charity was the look of the man walking on in front, than any deep-laid plan, any nefarious plot against his fellow's honour, any long train of treachery lighted and exploded at the end.

Following behind, and noting each turn of the head, each gesture, each movement, Thomas Palthorpe read the true nature of John Moffat aright.

He could not believe him a deceiver, a false finished hypocrite.

He did believe he had sent the money; but he found himself fighting against the idea he had meant aught save the truest kindness towards him. This man could not be a sinner—this man, with his calm manner, composed demeanour, earnest mode of talking. The thing was impossible. Some other one; some person his heartless wife had met, unknown to himself; some other who had caused her pulses to throb quicker for his coming, her face to brighten, her smiles to dimple her fair cheeks. Ah, me! ah, me! till the great judgment-day how shall we ever clearly understand each other, or comprehend what a mysterious trouble man's complex nature is here even to himself—how he wrestles against his own impulses; how he swears he will not be suspicious; how he is borne out on seas of higher meaning one moment, surely to be washed back by waves of doubt to the earthly shores his better self abhors!

On, and still on, passion gaining the mastery now, reason arguing in calmest accents then; an impulsive nature swaying thither and hither, as it tracked distractedly, not merely the footsteps of one long sought for, but also the devious twists and turnings of a past so obscure, it had oftentimes seemed the mysteries it held must for ever remain unsolved; thus they—the injured and the injurer—walked through the prettiest park of London, pacing both patiently forward to an end which they could not even dimly imagine.

Clearly between Mr. Woodham and Sir John the conversation had become engrossing, because the clergyman pursued his way to Hyde Park-corner without a thought of the distance he should have to retrace, while Sir

John did not seem to consider he might have found an omnibus long before he reached Apsey House.

An omnibus was preferably this rich man's favourite conveyance for reaching the City. He might have driven thither in his own carriage, or mounted a steed warranted to combine all equine virtues, or paid cab-fares; all the conveniences and luxuries poor folks consider desirable were within his reach, and yet he chose that at which those not Fortune's favourites are apt to turn up a scornful nose.

With the air of one quite accustomed to such exercises, he climbed modestly to a seat on the knife-board, scarcely noticing as he did so that a heavily-bearded man followed his example, and took his place on the other side.

'I shall hear from you, I suppose, before you return from Florence,' said Sir John to his companion, shaking hands as they passed upon the kerbstone.

'I will write to you frequently,' said the other.

That was all; but it seemed to the hearer enough.

At the corner of Prince's-street Sir John alighted; and, passing by the Bank of England, made his way through many a short cut and out-of-the-way court to his office.

In the City, it was patent to the man who followed him, his foot was on his native heath. At every step, almost, he encountered some friend, acquaintance, or inferior; greetings were exchanged, hats touched; clearly a man well known; a person whose whereabouts there ought not to have been any difficulty in discovering.

'He is a partner, perhaps, though, in some great house,' thought the bearded individual,



who had his memories connected with the City also.

No one in the olden days had ever seemed delighted to see him when he walked abroad, through twisting alleys and narrow lanes and busy thoroughfares; not even a beggar deemed it worth while to touch his hat to a fellow-creature so palpably impecunious as the then young clerk.

He had found the modern El Dorado paved for him with exceptionally hard flints instead of golden nuggets; he had walked those same side-paths tired and dispirited and mortified and sore perplexed. But then life was before him; now, twenty long years, taken out of the best part of existence, lay behind; twenty years a woman's perfidy had overclouded; twenty years he would have given up his money, his position, to recall.

'For I ought to have known the best or the worst then,' he considered. 'All these years I have been going about like a horse with a clog fastened to his foot; like the horse, too, scarcely feeling the impediment till now, when, looking back, I perceive how it has prevented my progress, and hampered every step of my way.'

Sir John turned into a narrow lane, then crossed a paved court, took his way up a narrow passage, and entered a building at the further end. At the corner of the passage a bank-messenger touched his hat respectfully; and a little further on a ticket-porter acknowledged his presence more obsequiously still.

'I don't believe he knows anything about the matter,' decided the man who followed in his wake with long loose strides; 'but I will go in and speak to him, anyway.'

With this intention he went up

to the entrance, and was about to push open the inside door, when his eye chanced to catch the name engraved on a great brass plate, stretching across the width of the mahogany:

'SIR JOHN H. MOFFAT.'

'Moffat won't spell Hay, however you work it,' he considered. 'No matter; if it be as I suspect, he is partner, or something of that kind,' and so thinking, he pushed open the door and walked in.

He found himself in a quiet outer office, where not more than half a dozen clerks were seated at different desks. Going up to the oldest, a white-headed respectable-looking bookkeeper, he asked if 'Mr. Hay was within.'

'There is no Mr. Hay here, sir,' answered the clerk.

'Surely I saw him enter this office a minute since?'

'Not to my knowledge, sir. We have not any one of that name in our employment.'

'Do you do business with any person of that name?'

'No, sir.'

Puzzled, more puzzled than he would have cared to confess, the man who had been so long absent from London, after tendering some vague apology for his intrusion, left the office, and wandered out into the passage. He took a turn round the court, and then, coming again upon the ticket-porter, asked,

'Do you remember a gentleman who passed up here just now?'

'Who was he?'

'That is just what I want to know; a gentleman with gray hair, who stoops a little.'

The porter shook his head, and answered,

'Such a many passes.'

'But you touched your hat to the gentleman I mean, and he

went into that office at the top there.'

'O, him? That is Sir John Moffat.'

'Are you sure?'

'Sure?' repeated the other contemptuously; 'of course I'm sure. I have known him go up and down this here place for a matter of thirty year and better. Here he comes, if that is the gentleman you mean.'

As they stood, Sir John passed by quite close. 'Yes, that is the gentleman I mean,' said the stranger who had followed him from Kensington.

'Then that is Sir John Moffat; and a better gentleman you would not meet if you walked London streets for a day,' said the porter genially, as he pocketed the half-crown he had feared might not be forthcoming.

Without further delay or inquiry Sir John's shadow hurried out of the court and followed him. For at least an hour he tracked his steps hither and thither: paused when he paused, waiting about the doors of great offices till Sir John, having finished his business, emerged into the street again; loitered if he stopped to speak to an acquaintance; and at length found himself occupying an adjacent box in a very out-of-the-way and very old-fashioned tavern, quite unlike any of the modern luncheon-bars or dining-rooms, where Sir John, having ordered a steak, potatoes, and half a pint of bitter, took off his hat, and, totally unconscious of observation, began to glance over the newspaper brought him by the waiter.

'What for you, sir?' asked the man, bustling in to the box occupied by the stranger.

For a moment the person so addressed hesitated; then laying down a shilling, and murmuring

something about a forgotten engagement, he went down the stairs, made his way to the nearest main thoroughfare, hailed a hansom, and bade the driver go as fast as he could to Kensington.

He found Doctor Dilton within. In two minutes he told him all he had done; in another he entreated his friend to return with him to the City.

'I am sure, and yet I am doubtful,' he said. 'Should you know him, do you think?'

'Among a thousand,' was the answer.

'Then come along. You will stand by me, won't you?'

'Yes, I will stand by you,' Doctor Dilton replied; but for all that he did not seem to relish the expedition.

They drove back straight to the City, and, dismissing the cab at the entrance of the narrow alley, walked up to the little court, crossed it, and reached the passage leading to Sir John's office.

'What a queer out-of-the-way spot!' remarked Doctor Dilton, speaking indifferently, though indeed he felt he had never been engaged upon any business in all his life he liked less.

'Yes,' answered his companion shortly.

They were now close upon the heels of some discovery, and the man's heart, crowded with the memories and the fears and the agony of twenty years previously, beat so fast he felt as if its throbbing would suffocate him ere he reached the door.

As they went up the passage they met the ticket-porter, who touched his hat as respectfully as though Sir John himself were coming along, bearing his weight of wealth and honours with him.

The short day was drawing to its close. The gas was already lighted in all the offices; a sense

of dreamy unreality seemed to steal over the pair so unaccounted to the City. They were bound on a very serious mission, and yet, had they been walking in their sleep, they would have felt their mission more actual than was the case.

'Is Sir John Moffat in?' asked Doctor Dilton, going up to one of the clerks. Remembering the morning's inquiries, his companion deemed it best to leave all preliminaries to him.

'Yes, Sir John is in,' answered the person addressed.

'Can I see him?' asked the doctor.

The clerk did not know. He got down off his stool and went and held a whispered conference with the elderly bookkeeper previously mentioned, then he came back.

'Sir John is engaged just now,' he explained.

'When will he be disengaged?'

'I am sure I can't say. It is a very bad time to see him; and this is foreign-post night also—and—'

Doctor Dilton moved back a step and spoke to his companion, who remained near the door.

'I *must* see him,' was the answer; which reaching the clerk, he asked if Mr. Bickton would do.

'No,' Doctor Dilton was quite sure Mr. Bickton would not do.

'Well, then, sir, I am very much afraid I must trouble you to call again, or write, because—'

'You had better refer the matter to Sir John himself,' said the gentleman standing near the door, stepping forward. 'I do not think he would very greatly thank you for compelling me to state my business to him on the door-step, which I shall do if I fail to see him in his office.'

There was something in the tone

and manner of this address which moved even the clerk, who happened, like all modern clerks, to be a very Cerberus for preventing intruders crossing the business threshold.

'Very well, sir,' he said resignedly. 'If you give me your name, and state the nature of the matter you have called about, I will see what can be done; but I am very much afraid—'

'Say a gentleman from Australia wishes to see him on private business,' interrupted Doctor Dilton diplomatically.

'I am sorry to say I must trouble you for your card,' persisted the clerk.

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed the doctor pettishly. 'Any one would think this was Buckingham Palace, and you Lord Chamberlain;' but his companion produced a card.

'Here,' he said, 'give this to your master; and remember you tell him it is private business—strictly private.'

The clerk took the card and looked at it; then he went away into some remote region, for they heard the closing of two or three doors behind him.

Doctor Dilton and his friend stood together by the door, and at a distance from the clerks who remained.

'I happened to have one of the General's cards in my case,' said the gentleman from Australia, in a low voice, 'and I sent that in.'

'If it should not be he after all?' suggested the doctor.

'I am sure it is he; but you will know,' was the answer.

'Yes, I shall know,' agreed Doctor Dilton.

'If you step this way, Sir John will see you,' said the clerk, returning almost on the instant.

Following him they passed through a second door, along a

passage, through a third door, then across a room out of which another opened.

In this inner apartment, behind a table on which a shaded lamp was placed, sat a gentleman engaged in writing. As his visitors entered he bowed, half rose, and, motioning them to be seated, resumed his chair.

The clerk left the room, carefully closing the door behind him. There was a moment's silence, which Sir John broke by asking, 'What can I do for you, gentlemen?'

As he looked up and spoke the light fell full upon his face, which had previously been in shadow.

Then Doctor Dilton, turning towards his companion, gave an almost imperceptible nod. Unblinded by passion, undistracted by doubt, he, at least, could have sworn to him amongst ten thousand.

'I want you to tell me where my wife is.'

Strange as the words were, the way in which they were spoken was stranger still. They were tumbled out one on the top of another, as if the man who uttered them hastened to deliver himself of the sentence ere his breath failed altogether.

A very desperate-looking man, with his thick hair tangled over his forehead, his face brown with exposure to the sun, his heavy beard and moustache, his anxious eyes and distressed expression.

'There is some mistake, I think,' suggested Sir John mildly, glancing at Doctor Dilton; for indeed at the moment he believed there was this much of a mistake, that one of his visitors was mad and the other his keeper.

'No, there is no mistake,' replied the stranger, whose hand grasped the edge of the table convulsively.

'I really am at a loss,' said Sir John, once again glancing towards Doctor Dilton, 'to imagine what you mean. How should I know anything about your wife? I never heard your name till within the last five minutes; and he looked towards the card which lay before him on the table.

'That is not my name,' explained the other, following the direction of Sir John's eyes. 'I only sent it in because your people would not take my message to you otherwise.'

In a dazed vacant sort of way Sir John turned from the speaker to Doctor Dilton. Some sort of recollection seemed dawning upon him, for he asked,

'Have I ever seen you before, sir?'

'Yes,' answered the doctor steadily.

'Where?' was the next question.

'In Stratford.'

'Stratford?' repeated Sir John.

'When?'

'When you went by another name and were called John Hay.'

Sir John did not answer immediately; he shrank back in his chair as if he had been struck, and cowered for a moment like one expecting another blow. He covered his face with his hand and remained motionless, whilst a dead silence reigned within the room. None of the three spoke a word; the very stillness of death seemed there.

At length Sir John removed his hand and lifted his head slowly, wearily.

'You asked me some question a little while since,' he said, addressing his younger visitor; 'what was it?'

'I asked you to tell me where I should be likely to find Mira Palthorpe.'

'Who are you that want tidings of her? What is your name?'

'Palthorpe!'

Sir John stood up—he rose to his feet as if lifted to them by some galvanic shock.

'Palthorpe! what Palthorpe?' he gasped.

'Thomas Palthorpe—her husband.'

'It is false!' cried Sir John. 'Thomas Palthorpe was drowned—years ago.'

'Thomas Palthorpe was not drowned years ago,' said the other, rising also, 'for he is alive now—and I am he.'

'You? Great God!' and Sir John dropped into his chair again, trembling in every limb.

The blinds in his office were not drawn down, and he could see from the window near which he sat into the old graveyard, lying cold and desolate without. Something in its forlorn loneliness, its unspeakable solitary aspect, attracted his attention, and he sat staring out into the night, thinking of the bright sunshiny morning when he read that the North Wales had gone down, and looked out on the scene he was gazing at now. They who had fretted out their little day lay mouldering there and were at rest. Lord, what weary, weary days he had passed through since he looked amongst the list of survivors in the *Times*! along what a darksome road he had stumbled painfully to the present hour! Would the time ever come when he should be at rest? Before he was carried to his grave would the whole world know the secret he had hesitated to intrust to the keeping of a single man?

What was this sudden blow which had stricken him? He had imagined and considered almost every possible way in which trouble might come to him, but

he had never thought of this. That the sea should give up its dead! That after years and years a man, who through their long progress had made no sign, should come back from his grave! He did not think these things, for of all thought in its ordinary sense he was incapable; but he felt them. Fear, regret, dread, remorse, surged through his soul without sequence or connection; and yet, spite of all, had he been conscious of the fact there was the sense of some great relief.

The worst had come; it had come in an even more terrible form than any anticipated; but in its train there followed one blessing. If this thing were true, the man lived, was there before him! Uriah had not been slain—his wife's husband, Rachel's father! Good Heavens, what a complication was here! Whose hand should disentangle the twists and knots of such a human skein?

Still looking out into the lonely churchyard, Sir John remained silent. Across the table the two men who had brought such news watched him intently; then Doctor Dilton, turning slightly towards his companion, shook his head, as one who should imply the sinner had borne all the punishment he could endure at once.

But Mr. Palthorpe would not take the hint. His brow darkened, and his face set, as he met the glance of compassion Doctor Dilton's countenance assumed; and without further delay he said, in a tone which sounded harsh and cruel by reason of the very restraint he was putting on himself,

'I am waiting for such tidings as you can give me of the woman who was my wife.'

At the words Sir John turned upon the speaker.

'And if I could give you tid-

ings of the woman you say was your wife, why should I? What can it signify to you whether she be living or not, happy or wretched, when all these years you have thought fit to leave her in ignorance of the fact of your existence?

With an incredulous wonder in his face the man addressed looked at Sir John when he uttered these words.

'In ignorance?' he repeated, 'in ignorance?'

'Yes, you have never come back till now to tell man or woman of your rescue.'

'Did I not?' was the only comment. 'Did I not?'

'Did you?' asked Sir John.

'Yes,' the man who once lost all for love replied. 'I came back one golden summer to find I had no wife—that she had stolen my child; that she had broken an old man's heart; that she had brought dishonour on my own name. I came back to find she had intercepted the letter I wrote to her aunt, asking her to break the good news—I hoped then, in my folly, she might think it good news—to her niece. I crossed the threshold of an honest house only to learn she had left it, bearing with her a burden of shame. She knew well enough I had been saved, and so did you, Sir John Moffat, as the world calls you—so did you.'

'God is my witness I never knew, never dreamt. If I had—O, if I only had!'

'This interview shall not be prolonged,' broke in Doctor Dilton, who perhaps read accurately the signs of absolute physical distress in Sir John's worn face. 'Of all men on earth you two are the last who should discuss this matter to the end—to the bitter, bitter end,' he added, with terrible emphasis. 'You have got the clue you wanted now, Mr. Pal-

thorpe; come home with me. Sir John, I told you, if you remember, she was far too handsome. Tell your solicitor the whole story, *whatever it may be*; that is the best advice I can give you. Come away, Palthorpe—come away.'

'Not till he answers my question,' said Mr. Palthorpe, standing erect and fierce. 'He has taken wife and child from me—where are they?'

'Give me a week—two days,' entreated Sir John; 'it has been all so sudden.'

'At least,' persisted Mr. Palthorpe, upon whose arm Doctor Dilton had laid a warning hand, 'tell me is my wife living?'

'She is living,' answered Sir John doggedly.

'And my daughter—the little child who seems to have possessed every quality her mother lacked, who was her poor old grandfather's treasure—is she—dead?'

'No, no, no!' cried Sir John, as he turned his face to the lonely graveyard, to hide the tears he could no longer repress, which trickled slowly down his haggard cheek.

'Come away,' insisted Doctor Dilton earnestly. 'Don't try the man any more.' And half leading, half dragging, he drew Mr. Palthorpe out of the office, along the passage, and so finally into the street.

'There is more in this business than meets the eye,' he said, when he and his former patient were once again in a hansom, driving back to Kensington. 'I would not judge him yet if I were you.'

But Mr. Palthorpe did not answer. He was looking with weary thoughtful eyes out on the pageant of human life sweeping under the gaslight along the pavement—marvelling, perhaps, in some vague intangible sort of way (for he was not a man given



either to analysis of his own motives or those of any other person), whether, amongst all the mysteries of science, anything could be found so mysterious, so unsatisfactory, so contradictory as a human being.

All the way to Palace Gardens he did not speak one word; in fact he had not a word to say. He felt stunned, not more by the success which had attended his efforts than by the effect which that success produced upon himself.

It was the mournfullest success man ever achieved. He had hunted his enemy down, and found him more full of sorrows, unless his face and manner were deceitful, than himself!

Worn, weary! He at least could not doubt that Sir John had found the bed of sin a most uneasy couch.

In a distant land Thomas Palthorpe had not spent solitary days and kept lonely vigils all in vain. He had talked, if dumbly, in a language his Maker understood, with God; and all the clamour of a great city—all the mightier loneliness of a populated town—could not in a moment dull the lessons conned in a wilderness—the truths learned under the quiet stars, with no teacher save Nature, and the Bible he knew almost off by heart to point the way to the only lore which shall most certainly give a man peace at the last.

'I will see you to-morrow,' said Doctor Dilton, as they shook hands at parting.

'Thank you,' was the reply; and the man walked towards his temporary home with the gait and mien of one thoroughly wearied out.

'And such a woman,' thought Doctor Dilton, while the cab sped down Palace Gardens on its way a little further westward, 'to spoil

the lives of two such men!' and his mind recurred not unfavourably to the contrast presented between his own little wife, who was not perhaps, in all respects, the wife he might have more happily chosen, and the physically magnificent creature who had wrought so terrible a shipwreck for two of his own sex.

'I always distrusted her,' he considered, and yet even while he said that he shivered.

Supposing she had been civil to him—supposing she had vouchsafed to the medical attendant who was always in antagonism one of her rare smiles—how might he in such case have fared? Doctor Dilton knew enough of her sex and of his own to feel sure his repulsion to the woman owed its origin as much to dread as to aversion.

'She *was* far too handsome,' he repeated to himself, 'and I have no doubt she took that unfortunate Sir John completely captive. I wonder where she is; and I think I should like to know something more about him and his domestic relations.'

It seemed as though Doctor Dilton's wish had been heard and answered on the minute, for he was scarcely within his cousin's house before the servant said a messenger had been twice round from Holyrood House, wanting him to go there immediately.

'Holyrood House!' repeated Doctor Dilton, who had no associations with the name; 'where is Holyrood House?'

'Palace Gardens, sir. Sir John Moffat's place.'

'Who is ill there?' asked the doctor.

'Lady Moffat,' was the answer.

Doctor Dilton opened the hall-door. The cab which had brought him back from the City was still close by, as the driver had got down

to make some alteration in his harness.

'Hi!' said the doctor, and in a moment more he was beside the man.

'Drive to Palace Gardens,' he went on, 'to Holyrood House, where Sir John Moffat lives.'

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### DOCTOR DILTON'S PATIENT.

SINCE he left Stratford Doctor Dilton had seen the inside of many a good house and noble mansion. He had made a name and reputation for himself, and worked up so good a practice that my lord at the castle and the squire at the hall were equally glad to hear the sound of his horse's hoofs when illness was beneath their roofs. The stately dignity of the one home and the comfortable luxury of the other were perfectly familiar to him, repeated as both chanced to be, in a greater or lesser degree, in all the houses of any pretensions he visited; but the lavish upholstery, the purely decorative style of furnishing which obtains in most London residences, struck him with unpleasant surprise. Wherever he turned it was the same story, with a difference—nothing seemed for use; everything was for show. The old houses, so suitable for families, were elbowed out of court by staring edifices fit only for the reception of company. Rooms were not wanted for living in, but merely to fill with guests. Residences were not houses to which a man might return after the heat and turmoil of business to enjoy a slippered ease, to join in the gambols and pleasures of his children, but advertisements where-with his credit might be maintained

and the inevitable hour of bankruptcy deferred.

Doctor Dilton had vaguely imagined Sir John Moffat's house would have been free of the modern craze for rich discomfort; but the moment he set foot across its threshold he found out his mistake. Money—money—money! everything money could buy—everything the possession of wealth could suggest! Amazed, he followed the butler across the hall, which gave promise of the wonders to follow. Still more amazed, he looked around the drawing-room, where he was left alone while Simonds went to inform my lady's lady of his arrival.

'I suppose he married some City heiress,' considered Doctor Dilton, 'and that all this is her taste;' and as so he thought his mind recurred to the long-ago past, when in the early morning, with the first beams of the rising sun glinting on the pinnacles of St. John's Church, he walked forth with the man he had seen again that afternoon, on a road which did not seem for him to have been strewn with roses.

The whole scene came before him vividly: the trees in the Grove and in the Green; the pure freshness of the morning air; the scents of the flowers that came to them as they walked; the look of the poor man's cottage, all set about with bud and blossom, clad in the beauty of climbers and creepers; Mrs. Palthorpe's sullen loveliness; the sickness unto death of the sick man; the kindly readiness with which the stranger, so suddenly pressed into an unwonted service, helped him to adjust the bandages; every detail of that fatal introduction passed through his mind, and once again he thanked God the woman had always seemed to him repellent rather than otherwise; that from the very first

there arose an antagonism between them, which never abated, but, on the contrary, increased.

His reverie was interrupted by Winter, who came to say that, if he pleased, her ladyship would feel obliged by his walking up-stairs.

'Is she confined to bed?' he asked, anxious to obtain some *carte du pays*, even though only of the slightest and sketchiest description.

'O no,' Winter answered; 'my lady never goes to bed, no matter how ill she may feel.'

'Was this a sudden attack?' he inquired. Foiled at one point, he thought he would try another.

'Very sudden, sir,' said the maid. 'My lady went to pay some visits, and had to return directly, she was taken so ill. She was greatly put out when she heard Doctor Merrard was away. Her ladyship feels he understands her so exactly.'

'Humph!' thought the doctor, not, perhaps, best pleased with this back-handed compliment; but he only said aloud, he trusted he might be able to prove of service.

'The doctor, my lady,' said Winter, cautiously entering Lady Moffat's dressing-room, and advancing towards an easy-chair, where the sufferer reclined, her head resting against the back, her face turned away from the light.

She did not take the slightest notice of Winter's statement, never moved nor stirred a finger. Winter, accustomed, however, to her ladyship's eccentricities, was not disturbed by this mode of receiving her information.

She placed a chair for the doctor near his patient; moved a little table on which stood water, sal volatile, red lavender, eau-de-cologne, and a few other such feminine restoratives, somewhat nearer Lady Moffat's hand, and then, inquiring if there were any-

thing more she could do, took an impatient gesture as a reply in the negative, and left the room.

Doctor Dilton, whose eyes were now growing accustomed to the half light, and who was wondering any woman could exist in an atmosphere so heavy with drug and perfume, availed himself of the pause which ensued to gain some idea of her ladyship's personal appearance. It did not instantly dawn upon him who Lady Moffat really was. The idea that my lady dressed in richest silk, with every accessory of wealth about her, surrounded by every luxury the heart of woman could desire, was identical with the slight girl-wife, whose graceful curves were set off by no costlier material than a cheap print, never entered his mind.

The years had come and the years had gone, and before him he saw not the figure which, standing under the Portuguese laurel, startled the gentleman who once walked the Romford-road at break of day, but a larger, more magnificent woman, upon whose shapely hand diamonds sparkled, whose stately throat was set off by frillings of the most delicate lace.

All at once, finding he made no sign, she impatiently raised her head, and, pushing back her hair with both hands, said, irritably,

'I thought you were never coming. I sent for you hours ago;' and she looked up at him with the eyes he had never forgotten, unchanged, save that the shadows of years lay lurking in their wonderful depths.

It is not too much to say Doctor Dilton almost gasped. This thing—this awful thing—he felt could not be; and yet it seemed still more impossible earth held two women so strongly resembling each other as Thomas Palthorpe's faithless wife and the mistress of

Sir John Moffat's splendid mansion.

In her face there gleamed no light of recognition. Doctor Dilton had worked hard and lived hard, and age had told upon him, as it always does on men whose toil, mental and physical, continues year in year out. While she had fared sumptuously, never known the lack of money, lain soft, slept soundly, troubled about nothing on the face of God's wide earth save her own comfort, her own ease, her own gratification—he had been out in all sorts of wild weather, called up at night, anxious now and then about wife and children, worried about difficult cases, tried by the multiplicity of awkward tempers he came in contact with.

He was changed out of recognition. Not so Lady Moffat. An older, handsomer, finer, more decided Mira Palthorpe, than she who looked enviously at the wives of the rich merchants who came to shop in Stratford Broadway, and whose marvellous beauty had seemed something superhuman when seen by the glinting moonbeams under the arching trees of Epping; but Mira Palthorpe still. O yes, he knew her! Without the shadow of doubt, he felt sure the woman before him was identical with the negligent wife he had talked to so often and so plainly in the poor parlour, love had never transformed and glorified for her.

All these thoughts and more swept through Doctor Dilton's mind even while he answered,

'I am sorry I was out when your messenger arrived. I came here the moment I returned home.'

'Well, now you are here see what you can do for me. Make my heart stop beating, will you? What must I take to get rid of this hammering in my head? I feel as

if I should like to go out and walk for miles and miles; but when I even try to cross the room my strength fails me.'

He took her hand in his, and felt it was dry and burning. In the olden days he had never retained it one second longer than he could help, but now he seemed in no hurry to relinquish his hold.

With calm deliberation he laid his fingers on her pulse, and counted its wild irritable throbblings, asking her some questions the while concerning her health in general. Then, quite leisurely, he proceeded to ascertain whether, medically, her frightful nervousness could be accounted for. From the first he felt satisfied her ailment, however it might have been produced, was purely mental; but he was far too careful a doctor to take his own opinions for granted unless he could find them confirmed by facts. Heart sound; lungs not affected; liver to be depended on; digestion not at fault; nothing he could discover amiss in her splendid physical constitution.

And yet her pulse such as no woman in health ought to have. Doctor Dilton again touched the white soft wrist, and, with head a little bent, was considering the story he was listening to in silence, when, suddenly and swiftly, his own was seized, and his hand pushed aside with a strong firm grip.

Steadily he looked in Lady Moffat's face.

'What is it?' he asked. 'What is the matter?'

She did not answer; she only gazed at him with a sort of wondering incredulity, a frightened amazement. Then that expression died away; the old sullen darkness deepened in her eyes; she relaxed her grasp, and released his hand.

'I am going mad, I think,' she murmured; and turning her face once again from him, laid it wearily against the velvet of her chair.

'You have had a shock of some kind to-day,' he said.

'A horrible shock,' she answered, shuddering as she spoke.

'I am afraid this is a case in which medicine can do very little; but I will send you something that may do you good.'

'I am afraid there is nothing will do that really,' she replied.

'Well, we must try, at any rate,' he said, trying to speak cheerfully. 'I hope I shall find you better when I call to-morrow.'

'I don't think you will,' she moaned despondently.

There was no use prolonging a dialogue of this kind; so the doctor rose, and after taking his leave moved towards the door, his eyes, almost unwittingly, taking in every detail of the luxury and refinement surrounding a woman who had sinned as few of her sex ever do sin, who had so dared that scarce any one would have possessed the courage and the folly to go through to the end.

'Doctor!' The word fell very faintly upon his ear, but as he heard he stopped, and retraced his steps.

She looked up at him; looked with a haggard hunted expression in her eyes that touched Doctor Dilton, in spite of his better judgment.

'There was something I wanted to say,' she remarked, toying with her fan, which she had not hitherto used, 'but I forget what it was now. I shall remember—to-morrow.'

He walked to the door again, had his hand even upon the handle, and then returned. She glanced askance at his homely figure, as he came close to her side; then, compelled by something in his

face, grasped her chair with both hands, while she looked up at him with wild frightened eyes, from which fear had cast out for a moment the evil light of old.

'Pray do not be alarmed,' he began gently, more gently than he had ever spoken to her in the far-away days at Stratford. 'I only want to ease your mind of one source of anxiety. The question you wished to ask me a moment ago was, unless I am greatly mistaken, whether I remembered you. No—no—don't do that;' for she covered her fair sinful face with trembling hands; 'your secret is quite safe with me. I should not be fit for my occupation if upon occasion I failed to be deaf, dumb, blind, to anything but the condition of a patient.'

She removed her hands from her face, and, stretching them out, caught his, crying wildly,

'Help me, help me!' But this was more than he had bargained for or meant to concede.

With but scant courtesy he released his fingers; and then, half ashamed of his impetuosity, stood silent, while she said mournfully,

'Ah, you always hated me!'

'I never liked you,' he answered, his sturdy honesty coming to his help in the moment of extremest need; 'but for that very reason you may trust me now. Were you Lady Moffat fifty times over, I should be sorry for you still.'

'I am Lady Moffat!' she cried. 'What do you mean by saying if I were?'

He shook his head slowly, sorrowfully.

'Never mind about that,' he said. 'Whatever you may be, whoever you are, makes no difference to me. If you think I can do you good I will come again; if not, all you have to say is, "Stay away." Your identity with a cer-

tain lady in the days when I was younger is safe with me. Good-bye.' And quite freely he held out his hand in farewell.

Perhaps in that very fact she read danger.

'What do you mean,' she asked, 'by suggesting I am not Lady Moffat?'

'I suggested nothing,' he answered. 'I am quite willing to take you for what you profess to be. So long as I am asked to attend Lady Moffat, I come to see Lady Moffat. If you do not wish me to come again, I will stay away.'

'No; I would rather you came,' she said, after a moment's pause; 'though what evil wind blew you to Kensington, I cannot imagine.'

'I simply came here to keep my cousin's practice together, while he goes down to my place ill,' was the reply.

'Since we bought this house, I have never known a day's peace,' she remarked wearily; 'never—never. I wish Palace Gardens had been buried fathoms deep before we heard of it.'

'You played for high stakes.'

'And lost,' she replied—'and lost.'

'If I might venture a suggestion—' he hesitated.

'Venture, whatever it may be,' she said.

'I would tell Sir John everything that is on your mind.'

'Too late,' was the despairing answer; 'too late—too late!'

'Unless I hear from you to the contrary, I will see you again to-morrow,' said Doctor Dilton. 'I shall send you something directly that should prove of benefit.'

And so, without more formal leave-taking, he quitted the room, pausing just for a moment, as he closed the door behind him, to

draw a long breath of wonder and relief.

As he so paused, he saw a gentleman walk along the corridor and down the staircase. It was Sir John Moffat; and instinctively Doctor Dilton slackened his pace, ere following in his wake. There were many reasons—hundreds they then seemed—why he should not at that moment meet the owner of Holyrood House.

'The cab is at the door, Sir John,' he heard the butler say, 'and I have put in the luggage.'

'Thank you,' said Sir John. And Doctor Dilton proceeding slowly down the grand flight—which at Holyrood House does not spring out of the main hall, but gives upon it—could see Sir John take his hat from Simonds, and suffer that functionary to assist him with his outer coat.

Not liking to stay, not caring to intrude, the doctor followed Sir John's footsteps leisurely across the hall. He saw him pass through the door, enter the cab; heard Simonds ask where the man was to drive, and say,

'Victoria—in time for the French mail.'

Then modestly he edged his own way out past Simonds, who stood on the steps looking into the night, and considering all the sins of all the masters he had ever served.

'What a lovely night for the time of year!' said Doctor Dilton, who had lived too long in the country to fall into the fatal mistake Londoners affect of 'keeping the lower orders at their distance.'

'Lovely, sir,' answered Simonds, moving a step or two back. 'May I take the liberty of asking how her ladyship is now?' this tentatively.

'I hope I shall find her better to-morrow,' answered Doctor Dil-



ton diplomatically. 'There is nothing serious the matter, however,' he went on, and most courteously he touched the brim of his hat in answer to Simonds' 'Good-night, sir,' proving thereby he was, as that functionary said to Mrs. Larrup, 'quite the gentleman.'

Ah, my friends, the day is coming, and a good day it will prove, when you will all have to be 'quite the gentleman,' as well to your inferiors as your equals. The 'gentlemen' of old were gentlemen once, gentlemen always; and the gentlemen of the future will be compelled to revert to their splendid example.

A plain, and in some respects a rough, man, Doctor Dilton was loyal, honest, stanch. Also, he was tender withal, and from the very bottom of his soul he pitied Sir John Moffat. As a matter of course, his first and best sympathies were with Mr. Palthorpe; but as he walked away from Holyrood House, and considered all that exposure and disgrace would mean to a man occupying so prominent a position, his heart sank within him, and he thanked Heaven it was not his hand that should deal the blow.

He understood something of the matter now. Knew that, whatever sin might have preceded the marriage, Sir John had tried to act fairly by a woman he believed a widow.

'Whatever wrong there has been,' he considered, 'was her doing. Well, she will have to pay an awful penalty for it all ere long.'

When he reached his cousin's house, the servant said there was a lady waiting for him in the dining-room, and entering that apartment he found Miss Aggles.

'I could not rest,' she began hurriedly, 'without coming round

to tell you what happened today. I have seen Mira.'

He could not help starting; it seemed as if all the parts of the terrible puzzle were fitting themselves together with no assistance save that of some mysterious Fate.

'Where?' he asked. 'How did you chance to come across her?'

'She called at our place.'

'She did what?' exclaimed Doctor Dilton, as though doubting the evidence of his senses.

'Not knowing she was going to meet me, you may be sure of that,' answered Miss Aggles, with grim earnestness. 'She came with a Miss Banks to call. I happened to be in the drawing-room, when she walked in as unconcerned and assured as possible, splendidly dressed, looking haughty and insolent, and magnificently handsome. O doctor, what a beautiful creature she is even now! And I can't tell, I am sure, how I knew her after all these years, but I did in a moment; and I was so amazed—so frightened indeed—I said "Mira," just like that, before I could think what I was doing.'

'And what did she say?' inquired Doctor Dilton.

'Not a word—not a syllable; she seemed to shrink and get smaller before my eyes; she lifted her hands this way,' and Miss Aggles held her own out before her as if to ward off some tangible foe, 'and backed, backed, Doctor Dilton, out of the room.'

'God bless me!' exclaimed the doctor; for Miss Aggles' account of the interview was graphic, and he could grasp all the horror such a meeting must have held for Thomas Palthorpe's faithless wife.

'And what happened then?' he asked at last. 'Did you follow her?'

'No, I did not, I felt too much stunned; but Miss Banks did. She is a lithe active little wo-

man, though elderly; and she ran down the stairs and out of the house, saying she feared dear Lady Moffat was ill.

'Yes; anything more?'

'She returned in a few minutes, to apologise, as she said, for herself and friend. Dear Lady Moffat, the sweetest and most sensitive creature on earth, had been quite overcome with the sudden shock. "She tells me you nursed her," went on Miss Aggles, quoting Miss Banks.

'And what did you answer?' asked Doctor Dilton, who was able to see the humour of the statement.

'It took me a little aback; but I said, "Well, yes, I certainly had nursed her."'

'What occurred next?'

'Nothing much, I think. Miss Banks of course was inquisitive. She is not a nice person, I think; but she did not get any information out of me.'

There ensued a short silence; then Doctor Dilton asked,

'Have you told him?' No need to particularise whom he meant by name.

'Not yet. I am not sure that I shall. He came home thoroughly unnerved. He has found the—the—person—you know.'

'Yes, I know,' answered Doctor Dilton.

'And then what a horrible complication it makes, her being married; and to such a great gentleman, too! Who is Sir John Moffat?'

'Haven't a notion,' said Doctor Dilton.

'He is enormously rich, Miss Banks says,' went on Miss Aggles.

'She played her cards well, did she not?' remarked Doctor Dilton.

Miss Aggles shook her head mournfully.

'Such a tangle,' she said, 'such a tangle! And then there is Rachel, too. He tells me she is alive. Now, her father ought to claim her at any rate, ought he not?'

'He has waited a good many years,' observed Doctor Dilton dryly. 'I should imagine he could wait a few days longer.'

'And here is another trouble, too,' went on Miss Aggles. 'Mr. Lassils and Madge have to-day finally agreed not to marry.'

'Why not?' he asked. 'I understood Lassils, at all events, did not mean to give up hope for a long time yet.'

'He has found out she likes somebody else.'

'Who, in Heaven's name?'

'He says Mr. Palthorpe.'

'Good Lord!' ejaculated the doctor. 'You don't believe it, do you?'

'I am not sure,' said Miss Aggles dubiously. 'It never occurred to me till he mentioned it; but I am not sure now.'

'She has no idea he is married, I suppose?'

'It was not a matter we were likely to mention, I am sure,' continued poor Miss Aggles. 'What with one thing, and what with another, I feel as if I could not be in my right senses.'

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### WAITING.

A MONTH passed quickly by, and still the world knew nothing of the true state of affairs at Holyrood House. From that night, when, without his dinner, and without the slightest warning or preparation, Sir John drove away from the door, he had never crossed its threshold. In the first instance he went to Paris; but

Simonds knew he had returned to London, and was to be found at his place of business in the City. If there had been a quarrel between himself and Lady Moffat, no servant about the house was cognisant of the fact; indeed, no ground existed for supposing any disagreement had occurred, for on the morning of the day in question, they had parted upon apparently perfectly friendly terms, and when he returned in the evening he did not see her.

The doctor was with her ladyship when Sir John passed hurriedly up the staircase; and he left the house, having, no doubt, Simonds and Winter decided, confided the cause of his sudden departure to Miss Rachel.

That it was all very odd the whole household agreed; but domestic opinion inclined to the belief that something had gone wrong about money.

A considerable number of large establishments were broken up about that period; the papers were full of frauds, failures, conspiracies, and vague rumours of further impending disasters; and, for his own part, Simonds could see no reason why his master should not 'go' as well as anybody else.

Very likely her ladyship had heard a hint about the matter when she was taken ill so suddenly; and, under any circumstances, there could be no doubt she and Sir John understood each other perfectly.

'He'll be found missing one fine morning, as Seaton was,' considered the butler, 'and she'll stop to save as much out of the wreck as she can.'

The whole atmosphere of the house was felt to be steeped in mystery. Lady Moffat, on pretence of ill health, would see no visitors. Yet Winter reported to

the kitchen detectives there was nothing the matter with her, save temper.

Directly after Sir John's departure, an old lady had called upon, and been closeted with, Lady Moffat for a couple of hours; and, in course of time, it became known to the servants this lady came from the house in Palace Gardens 'where the Australian people lived.'

Somehow, also, Mr. Simonds ascertained that an Australian gentleman had been at Sir John's office, and that he (Sir John) 'never seemed to be the same man since.'

'Depend upon it, there's losses,' said Mrs. Larrup oracularly; 'that's what it is—losses.'

'I am quite of your opinion, cook,' agreed Miss Winter, flitting airily about the lower regions, and remarking from time to time she never had lived previously among people who were so precious close as the Moffats.

'They never let fall a word; and if she' (in the easy confidence of private life Winter referred to her mistress in the simple manner stated) 'does get a letter, she burns it away to white ash—she does, I assure you.'

'When folks as should be gentlefolks, and act according, begin to look after candle-ends—as a person may consider pounds of meat is no more nor candle-ends to them,' remarked Mrs. Larrup, with genuine belief in her tone—'it does not need any conjurer to tell what is coming. I have always said, and I always will say, that if them as is set in high places keep their position proper, their position will keep them; but when they begin a-poking and a-prying and a-questioning, and paying their own bills and disputing farthings, it looks bad, and it'll end bad; and,

though I may not be here to see it, mark my words.'

'I can't say I ever did think much of Sir John as a master,' capped Mr. Simonds disparagingly. 'There was no presence about him. I am sure, when he had guests here, I have often felt almost ashamed to see him sitting so dull and silent.'

'Ah, if you had much to do with her, you'd only wish she would be silent,' said Winter. 'Of all the tempers I ever did come across—there, well, though I say it myself, I feel as if I must have been a saint to put up with such continual scolding and grumbling and airs and graces.'

'I wonder what's become of old Banks all this time,' marvelled Simonds; 'she ought to be in the thick of whatever is going to happen.'

'Mrs. Hemans told me on Sunday she is trying to keep Mr. Gayford's soul and body together. He has been very bad indeed with bronchitis,' explained Mrs. Larrup.

'She is a spiteful cat; but I will say this much for her, she takes good care of him,' observed Miss Winter. 'There is nothing he wants money can buy, Niel told me some time ago.'

'Then I am very certain she finds her interest in keeping him alive,' Simonds declared; a statement which found so much favour that a murmur of approval passed from lip to lip.

'Miss Rachel goes over there most days,' said Winter. 'Her ladyship is very anxious to know how he goes on. I believe she sends Banks money.'

'Likely enough; that sort of busybody always can get money. Miss Edwina does not go, I'll be bound. She has too much to do meeting young Lassils in the Park,' and then their heads all drew closer together, and gossip got

very brisk indeed; and every one agreed it was a pity some one did not tell Sir John; not, indeed, that it would much signify, if he 'smashed,' whom his younger daughter took up with.

In those days, the servants at Holyrood House had very little to do; the social atmosphere was oppressive, and they had plenty of leisure time to consider the shortcomings of those whose bread they ate, and to speculate concerning Sir John's sudden and unaccountable absence from his home.

As for Lady Moffat herself, she passed the hours in a long fever of dread and apprehension.

Everything was found out now, though the world still remained in ignorance of her antecedents. Sir John knew all about the cruel deceit she had practised, had nothing more to learn as regarded her perfect knowledge of her husband's safety.

'When I remember all,' he wrote to her, not in anger, but in sorrow, 'the anguish you have seen me suffer, the travail of my soul over the man I believed dead, I feel I cannot—as if I never could—forgive you. But for that you will not care; all you desire is money, position. The last, even if I wished, I could no longer give you; as regards the former, I shall settle upon you a moderate, but sufficient, income. Your husband, I understand, intends to sue for a divorce; and, as I intend to sell Holyrood House, it will be easier and better for you either to go abroad or retire to some quiet watering-place. I have not yet fully decided upon my future arrangements; but in any case the children will live with me.'

And he hinted that the sooner she could leave Holyrood House, and betake herself to the contem-

plative life indicated in his letter, the better he would be pleased.

But she could not give up everything in a moment at his bidding—wealth, rank, consideration—and sink into as total an obscurity as that from which he had raised her. To the world she was still Lady Moffat, to her children, to her servants; four people only knew her what she was; and she knew she could count on the silence of three of them. The fourth—ah! she dreaded him. But if she could only defer the evil day a little longer, who knows what might happen? For his own sake Sir John would never make the matter public, never try to prove she was not legally his wife; whilst as regards the other, fifty things were possible; amongst them, that he might die.

She had no scheme in her mind about killing him; though violent, she was not made of the stuff out of which murderers are fashioned. And yet, given the opportunity, supposing a chance had presented itself of slipping that obnoxious first husband out of the world, it may be she would have helped him over the hardest part of his long journey with as little remorse or compunction as she had stolen Rachel from the true hearts that loved her.

Now it may indeed be said Rachel was her only hope. She thought it not impossible that, for the sake of his child, her husband might let the dead past lie; Sir John, she knew, could be moulded by the girl. The more she reflected, the more probable it seemed to her she might yet escape the full measure of the punishment she dreaded.

If she could still remain Lady Moffat, if the world could only be induced to believe she and Sir John were separated merely because of incompatibility of tem-

per, if she could close Thomas Palthorpe's lips, why, then, although things might not be quite so well as they had been, still no one should hear her complain.

The more she thought about the matter, the more satisfied she felt Rachel was now her only rock of safety. If there were only some one in whom she could confide, some one with whom she could take counsel! Doctor Dilton? Yes, the very first opportunity she would talk to him about the matter. How did it happen she had not thought of him before—knowing all the circumstances also?

But Doctor Dilton nipped her confidences in the bud.

'You have not seen my elder daughter yet?' she said one day, fixing him with an anxious unsmiling gaze, which yet was meant to be gracious and winning, and which he felt covered more than her words conveyed.

'No,' he answered shortly; 'and I don't want to see her. To be quite frank—'

'You never were anything else, I think,' she interrupted.

'I have no desire or intention of being mixed up with this business. I was called in to see you as Lady Moffat, and Lady Moffat, from a medical point of view, you remain to me.'

'But Rachel—' she began.

'Whatever you have got to say about her could be best said to her father, I should think,' he replied brusquely. 'I know pretty well what is in your mind, but it is of no use trying to take me into your confidence. I will have no say in the matter.'

Foiled here, Lady Moffat betook herself to her daughter, poor lonely Rachel, who was now, indeed, as desolate a maiden as could have been found in the length and breadth of London.

She heard from Sir John regularly; she had prayed that she might go and see him at the office, but he would not hear of it.

'Some day,' he wrote, 'I will explain everything, but when that day arrives I shall lose you.'

'NEVER,' she wrote back. 'You will always be to me my own dear father, as I shall be to you your own loving child.'

What a stab was there! what a cruel game of cross-purposes it all seemed! what weary days those were! what a time of terrible suspense, of cruel uncertainty!

'Rachel,'—it was Lady Moffat who spoke, standing in her daughter's room, and looking with wistful eyes that yet saw nothing of the landscape over the yews in Kensington that had grown so sadly familiar to her daughter's sight,—'if I asked you to do something for me, I wonder whether you would refuse my request?'

'You wonder, mamma!' repeated the girl, surprised. 'Surely you know there is nothing in the world you could ask me I would not do.'

'Do you mean that, Rachel? for I have not been a good mother to you; I never cared for you; I never loved you.'

'I know that,' answered the tender heart, with a little sob of pain; 'but it makes no difference. I would do anything I could, as though you loved me as much as you love Edwina and the boys.'

Lady Moffat stopped short. She was walking with a slow swinging movement, not habitual to her, up and down the room. There was a rest in Rachel's presence she did not feel elsewhere; a repose about her which, at the moment, seemed grateful to the stormy violent nature which had come to grief at last on a cruel iron-bound coast.

'I am not certain,' she answered, 'I ever loved Edwina or the boys. I don't think, Rachel, it is in me to love anything.'

In a moment the girl was beside her mother, had drawn her to a seat, and lay weeping on her breast.

'What can I do for you?' she asked after a little time. 'Only tell me—only try me. Do you want me to go to papa? Yes, whether he is angry or not—O, he would not be long angry with me—I will go. What do you wish me to say? You will let me try to help you, won't you?'

Yes, Lady Moffat had no argument to urge against so laudable a desire. But she could not tell her yet, she said—not just yet; and so for a time they talked together, while the twilight deepened and the shadows crept on, and the figures of both became indistinct in the gathering darkness; and Winter wondered what on earth her ladyship was doing in Miss Rachel's room.

'What I want you to do for me one day—some day very soon, perhaps,' said the elder woman at last deliberately, and yet as if the words were wrung from her, 'is to go to your father—to stand between me and your father. When I ask you, will you?'

'Of course, dear mamma,' the girl answered, all unconscious of her mother's meaning; 'how could you think otherwise?'

That evening Simonds remarked at dinner her ladyship appeared in excellent spirits.

'I daresay she has good news from Sir John, and that he may pull through yet,' considered the butler. 'I hear he has gone to France again. Getting help, perhaps, from some of those foreign bankers.'



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE.

'Put down your work, aunt, and give me all your attention; I want to speak to you seriously,' and Mr. Palthorpe laid aside his book, and, crossing his arms upon the table near which he sat, answered with a grave wistful smile Miss Aggles' look of apprehension.

'All speaking has been serious lately,' she said, folding up her knitting and sticking the needles carefully in it, as though her very soul were concentrated in the operation.

'Yes; but I have now made up my mind,' he answered. 'I have been a long time about it, certainly; still—'

'It was right for you to weigh the matter fully,' she replied firmly, though her voice trembled a little at first. 'I, for one, can see no reason why you should hesitate to free yourself at last from a trouble which has burdened all the best years of your life.'

He did not say anything for a minute; he only glanced round the pleasant cosy-looking room with an expression of quiet content.

Save for the servants, he and Miss Aggles were alone in the house. General Graham and his daughter had been gone for some time to stay with friends in the country; and it was tacitly understood amongst those who, till so recently, deemed they were always to make their pleasant home together, that when Mr. Palthorpe left Palace Gardens for good, as he meant to do ere long, the Grahams would return to the house and take up their abode in London.

Very little was said on the subject between General Graham and

his friend, but that little chanced to be so much to the purpose that the former clearly understood present arrangements could not continue.

Miss Aggles and Mr. Palthorpe were therefore alone, as they had often been before, in poverty and in prosperity, during the years which now seemed so many and so distant.

'You have never asked me where I spent the last few days,' he remarked, after a pause which seemed longer than was actually the case.

'No,' she answered; 'not—not with the Grahams?'

'I should be an even poorer fellow than I am had I done that,' he replied. 'I went to Ravensmede.'

'To Ravensmede! What in the wide world induced you to go there?'

'I wanted to see the old place. The Hall is to be sold.'

'Sold!' repeated Miss Aggles. 'How does that happen?'

'I do not know; but there the boards were up, and I asked leave to view the house and went through the familiar rooms. How small they looked! but O, how inexpressibly dear they seemed! I wandered amongst the plantations, and climbed the hill from which I used to watch the ships passing down the Channel; and then I walked slowly, not with the eager haste of former days,' he added, with a sad smile, 'down the path which led to the old orchard, where I used to see her with the sunlight glancing on her lovely face, that I thought once was the most beautiful in all the land.'

'It is beautiful still,' said Miss Aggles; but he put the remark aside with a gesture which proved that between the past and the present there was, for him, a gulf fixed as broad and deep as that

described in the parable as stretching, in the next world, between the rich man and the poor.

'If the joy and the sorrow, the harvest of love I thought I was reaping, the worldly loss I actually sustained, were matters only of yesterday instead of twenty and odd long years, they could not have seemed more present with me than was the case. I thought the whole affair over, considered my own part in it and hers, and I have determined,' he drew a quick gasping breath ere he added, 'to let her and her sin both rest; I shall not sue for a divorce.'

'Not sue for a divorce! Keep yourself tied to a woman who has been more cruelly false to you than woman ever was before!'

'Even so,' he answered quietly. 'I have made up my mind; I feel no uncertainty on the subject now. I took her for better or worse; out of my own headstrong will I married her; and though it all turned out worse, I am not going to shrink from my part of the punishment. Look you,' he went on, 'the last time I saw the Hall the trees were green about it and the flowers in bloom, and the blue sky overhead and the bees humming amongst the ivy; now driving clouds made both sea and land look bleak and cold and gray. There was not a flower to be seen; the trees were bare, the birds silent; down in your old orchard not a bud, not a ruddy apple or a golden plum; no waving corn, no grass knee-deep in the meadows; but still it was the same place, and she—God help us both!—is the same woman she was.'

There ensued a long silence. Then said Miss Aggles, 'You ought to think most seriously about all this. The day may come—'

'No,' he answered, 'the day

may not come; the day shall not come. What I say I have decided, and I now know a rest and a peace I never experienced since last I returned to England. If I were to sue for a divorce, now I know very well *why* I should strive for it, and that I should never afterwards experience one easy moment. Nothing I could do would help her; even if Sir John now married her, that could not undo the scandal caused by a public trial. And then there is Rachel to consider also.'

'Yes; what are you going to do about her?'

'I must have my daughter,' was the answer. 'I will tell you all my plans, though I can scarcely say yet how I mean to carry them out. To-morrow I will see Dilton, and get him to settle matters with Sir John; I could not do that myself—I could not; and there is no need to take the lawyers into our confidence. I mean to buy the Hall. O, I forgot to mention, it turns out by some curious twist of fortune that old Nelfield's eighty thousand reverts to me. His direct heirs are dead, and my mother, it seems, if she had survived would now have been the nearest of kin. I shall make a handsome settlement on Madge, and see what can be done for Lassils; but I do not intend to give up the whole amount. And now I want you to do something for me. Before I see Dilton to-morrow I wish to put the matter beyond the power of recall. I want you to go and tell *her* so far as I am concerned she need fear no exposure. She may rely upon my promise. For his own sake and his children's Sir John will keep matters quiet. There will be a separation, but the world need not know why they separated. I have thought it all over; the greatest difficulty

I see is how we are ever to explain things to Rachel.'

'And we know nothing about how she has grown up,' said Miss Aggles helplessly. 'People say she is a sweet nice girl; but it is hard to tell. I have so wished to see her, and never yet succeeded, though I often pass the house half a dozen times a day.'

'I have seen her often,' he answered, with a dreamy look of satisfaction in the eyes which were so like her own.

'How? when?' asked Miss Aggles eagerly.

'Many places,' he replied; 'followed her as she went on her little errands of charity; walked behind her and her sister in Kensington; seen her on the terrace behind Holyrood House; and watched her wandering thoughtfully round the paths in Sir John's garden. Many and many a time I have stood behind the tree growing close beside the fence dividing Kensington from Palace Gardens, and seen her looking out of the window of her own room, with a sad troubled look on her young face. O, yes! I know my daughter well; I wish she had half or quarter as much acquaintance with me.'

Loyal, faithful, unselfish, time had not changed his nature, years had wrought no difference in his reluctance to give pain—in his ability to suffer silently.

Beyond all other perplexity this seemed greatest, how to hint to his child a word of her mother's shame. If he could have left that as it was, he would even have given up his daughter. But there is a point beyond which a man cannot go; and with him this point seemed reached when he thought of Rachel living on with the woman who had spoiled his whole existence—believing herself the daughter of the man whose

blood could not have washed out the wrong committed.

'I will go if you wish,' said Miss Aggles, after a moment's pause, reverting to their previous subject of conversation; 'but I certainly do think you ought not to decide such an important question in a hurry.'

'I have not decided it in a hurry,' he answered. 'Day and night it has never been absent from my mind for months past. I have tossed on seas of doubt, and temptation, and passion, and revenge; but I know now what I ought to do, and I shall not draw back. When will you see her—to-night?'

'Not to-night,' said Miss Aggles, shrinking a little from the proposal.

'Then write to her,' he persisted; 'write that you will call to-morrow morning early. Say also you can take her good news; otherwise she may, perhaps, refuse to see you.'

'But why,' asked Miss Aggles, 'should I write at all?'

'Because,' he answered, 'I want to feel, before I sleep, one step is taken on a road I know to be right.'

Reluctantly, because she believed in this last concession to his worthless wife Thomas Palthorpe was putting away all hope he might ever possess of a happy home, of domestic felicity, in the years to come; and yet thankfully, because her own heart still yearned over the woman she had taken to her arms when her own mother forsook her—and she would have spared her open shame and disgraceful exposure at any cost to herself—Miss Aggles drew writing materials towards her and finished a note, which she handed across to her companion.

'Thank you,' he said, folding it up; 'I will see it is sent immediately.'

'O,' she entreated, 'just think over the matter for another hour — only one hour.'

'Not one minute!' he answered firmly, and, leaving the room, despatched a messenger to Holyrood House.

Ere long a verbal reply was returned:

'Her ladyship was much obliged, and would be glad to see Miss Aggles at the hour mentioned.'

As the door closed behind the servant who delivered this message Mr. Palthorpe and Miss Aggles looked at each other and smiled, in spite almost of their own inclination.

'Her ladyship, indeed!' said Miss Aggles indignantly. '*Her ladyship!*'

But Mr. Palthorpe made no remark, only sat for a little time gazing intently at the fire.

Not, perhaps, with the best will in the world, but still with as good a grace as she could assume, Miss Aggles, after breakfast next morning, tied the strings of her old-fashioned bonnet — which she called her 'old woman's bonnet' — in an elaborate bow under the chin, and betook herself to Holyrood House.

Arrived there, she was asked into the library, while Simonds went in search of Winter, who presently appeared to say,

'Her ladyship had not yet rung her bell, and would Miss Aggles be kind enough to wait for a little while?'

'Yes,' Miss Aggles said, 'she would wait. Was Lady Moffat likely to ring soon?'

Winter could not tell; her ladyship was most uncertain, and never liked to be disturbed. Indeed, her (Winter's) directions were most positive not to disturb her on any pretext whatever. For many months her ladyship had

been sleeping very badly, and the doctors laid great stress upon her getting sleep, if possible.

While Winter was delivering herself of these various statements Edwina came in.

'You are the lady mamma was expecting to call this morning, I suppose?' she said. 'I am so sorry she is not up. Won't you have a cup of tea or coffee?'

No; Miss Aggles had breakfasted, but expressed a desire to know at what hour Lady Moffat's awaking might generally be looked for.

Edwina did not know. Sometimes she rose at six, and sometimes not till one.

'If you think it in the slightest degree likely she won't get up until one to-day, I am sure I shall not stop,' observed Miss Aggles, rising. 'I had an appointment with her, and I think she ought to have kept it.'

There was that in the visitor's manner which, taken in connection with her mother's manifest pleasure on the arrival of Miss Aggles' note the previous evening, impressed Edwina considerably.

She turned to the maid.

'Do you think we might venture for once?' she asked dubiously.

'O dear, no, miss,' answered Winter; 'I would not dare to do such a thing. I did once at Scarborough, if you remember, and her ladyship was very angry with me, very angry indeed.'

'Well, I'll risk that,' said Edwina determinedly. 'If you kindly wait a few minutes longer,' she added, speaking to Miss Aggles, 'I will tell mamma you are here;' and she left the room, followed by Winter, who whispered as they were crossing the hall,

'I would not do it, Miss Edwina, I would not, indeed. The lady lives close by here, and we

could easily send round ; I could even run up myself when your mamma rings.'

'Nonsense, Winter,' retorted Edwina ; 'mamma is ever so much better now, and I daresay she would be vexed if we let this lady go. She had an appointment with her, I know.'

'I am aware, miss, it is not my place to speak, and if you please to take the responsibility—'

'Of course I please to take the responsibility,' answered the girl scornfully ; 'did I not say so ?'

And waiting for no further remonstrance she made her way upstairs, and knocked softly at her mother's door. Winter, following her to the first landing, discreetly retired to the room where she generally occupied herself with needlework. There was a dead silence throughout the house ; for a few minutes not a sound could be heard ; then suddenly there rang out, in a tone of frightened agonised entreaty, the word 'Rachel !'

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### ANOTHER AUTUMN.

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THE leaves again are glorious green and golden ;  
The child is gone  
Whose laughter through the bright glades in the olden  
Days lured me on.

While as of old with sanguine autumn splendour  
The wild woods shine,  
Not as of old the young face, soft and tender,  
Looks up to mine.

Once I could happier make a child's heart, beating  
With love of me,  
By word or touch, than all the high sun's greeting  
Makes glad the sea.

Now weary amid the self-same groves I wander ;  
As erst, they are fair.  
But one gold gift shines not, that once shone yonder—  
A child's gold hair.

One gentle thing that sounded, sounds not ever—  
A child's sweet tone :  
One hand will seek the hollow of my hand never ;  
I am alone !

G. B.

## FORTUNES MADE IN BUSINESS.

### XX.

MESSRS. A. & S. HENRY & CO.

In point of significance and comprehensiveness, few trade terms can compare with the time-honoured title of 'merchant.' The word runs through the entire sphere of buying and selling, and is tacked on to the humble dealer in rags as well as to the lordly trafficker in gold. *Il y a fagots et fagots.* From the towering commercial heights whereon the De' Medici family gained treasure and power, to the lowest rung of the merchant ladder, there is a vast and profound space. At one end we touch the borderland of kingly dignity and influence; at the other we are only one remove from the beggars who solicit alms from us in the street. In many notable instances the successful merchant-prince has himself travelled over the entire space, beginning as a penniless beggar-boy, and ending as a titled millionaire. The trading annals of England have frequently recorded, in slightly varied forms, the story of Dick Whittington, and at no period of our commercial history could we point to so many men as now, who have worked themselves up from the humblest positions to opulence and rank. This is essentially the era of self-made men; and the best part of the world's greatness is of their making. The vast commercial houses, which have been built up by the well-directed energy of our chief merchants, throw the enterprises of previous

times into the shade. These men have not only made their own fortunes, but, by opening up fresh markets in various parts of the world, have been the means of spreading wealth in many directions, giving better employment to the labouring classes, affording an encouragement to inventive genius, and always acting as the true pioneers of commerce. They have explored the universe in the interests of industry, and, through their intervention and by their direction, the looms and spindles of England have been kept running from year to year, and, in spite of the periods of trade depression, which have now and then intervened, have yielded both individual wealth and general prosperity.

Foremost amongst these merchant-pioneers have been the men who have taken part in originating and developing the great mercantile house of A. & S. Henry & Co., whose operations extend over all parts of the civilised and uncivilised globe, and whose well-known establishments at Manchester, Bradford, Huddersfield, Glasgow, and Belfast embrace every branch of our textile industries.

The Henrys are an Irish family, a fact which may have some bearing possibly on the circumstance that the present head of the firm, Mr. Mitchell Henry, sits in the House of



Commons as the representative of an Irish county constituency. The first of the Henrys to make a name in the commercial world was the late Mr. Alexander Henry, who was born in the north of Ireland in 1766, emigrated to America in 1783, settled in Philadelphia as a clerk, and subsequently became one of the most successful merchants in that city, retiring with an ample fortune in 1807. His career in the City of Brotherly Love was at once eminent, useful, and unostentatious. For many years he was one of the ruling elders of a leading Presbyterian church in Philadelphia, and in all philanthropic and educational movements and institutions he took a lively interest, and assisted them nobly by his pecuniary contributions. He was one of the men who helped to lay the foundations of Philadelphia's commercial power. - At the time of his settling there, a desperate attempt was being made to establish the textile industries in Philadelphia, and had it not been for the efforts of a few such energetic men as Alexander Henry, the probability is that the manufactures which have since risen to such importance in that city would have drifted elsewhere. As it was, Mr. Henry had the satisfaction of seeing the city of his adoption extend its industrial power at the same time that his own private commercial undertaking was making rapid headway; and when he retired in 1807, and left the active management of the business to younger hands, the name of Henry had become a revered and honoured one in the commercial history of the United States.

The name, however, was destined to acquire a still wider influence in the years to come, for another Henry—also called

Alexander Henry, and the nephew of the eminent merchant of Philadelphia—had entered upon a commercial career, resolved to follow in his uncle's footsteps. This young man, brought up under the care of his uncle, inspired by a desire to emulate him in his personal virtues and public zeal, and possessed of a strong inclination to launch forth into new commercial ventures, soon found active employment for himself. America was yet in its infancy as far as regarded commerce, and young Henry's aspirations required a wider sphere of operation, if they were ever to win fulfilment; so in 1804 he came over to Manchester, and began business in Palace-street, retaining the American connection, and making it his chief object to bring the United States into closer commercial contact with England. His business increased beyond his anticipations, and he found it necessary, before long, to remove to larger premises, in Spear-street. He now took his younger brother, Mr. Samuel Henry, into partnership, and the firm of 'A. & S. Henry' soon became one of the leading houses in Manchester.

The factory system had not yet been completely built up, and the era of great 'cotton lords' had hardly been entered upon. The power of the steam-engine was beginning to spread into all departments of industrial labour, and the inventions of Arkwright, Crompton, and others were rapidly revolutionising the trade, which had Manchester for its centre. The means of production were being multiplied a thousandfold, and it was for the merchants of the large manufacturing towns of the North to find customers for this increased supply of fabrics. Into this all-important work Messrs. A. & S. Henry threw themselves with their

whole energy. They sent their envoys out to the remotest parts of the earth in quest of races and peoples desirous of being re-clad, devoting their attention chiefly, however, to the North American continent, in the various cities whereof they quickly established an extensive and profitable connection. Messrs. A. & S. Henry were the leaders, so to speak, in the English trade with America, and for many years they were the chief exporters of manufactured goods to that country. Their house came to be known as the American house; though in later years many other American houses have sprung up in Manchester and Bradford. The Henrys did not confine their operations to dealing simply in Manchester cottons, but gradually laid themselves out for the supplying of all descriptions of fabrics—cottons, woollens, worsteds, silks, and what not—and opened branch warehouses in all the principal commercial centres of this country. At Leeds they placed themselves in the midst of the heavy woollen district; at Huddersfield obtained full command of the fancy cloth trade; at Bradford gained ready access to the makers of worsted goods; at Belfast were put in direct communication with the manufacturers of Irish linen; and at Glasgow were able to obtain a firm footing amongst the various producers of Scottish textiles. At each of these places managing partners were established, with separate and distinct interests, but all responsible to, and in direct connection with, the parent house at Manchester, which retained, and still retains, the supreme control over all the concerns. With these numerous fields to draw upon, and with an ever-increasing connection abroad, no wonder that the firm prosper-

ed. The amount of personal supervision given to the business affairs of the house at this time by Messrs. Alexander and Samuel Henry was something marvellous; early and late they were to be seen at their posts, and there was not a single detail of the trade to which they did not pay attention. Frequent voyages had to be made between this country and America by one or other of the brothers, and long and dreary must the voyages have seemed to them, eager and ardent as they were. In those days the average time of passage was thirty days, but occasionally, by stress of weather or other circumstance, the vessels were retarded, and one time Mr. Alexander Henry was seventy days in going over. Mr. Alexander Henry crossed the Atlantic upwards of thirty times, but never made the voyage after the introduction of steamers.

In 1836 Mr. Henry built the present large warehouse in Portland-street, Manchester, in order to keep pace with the firm's increasing operations. By this time they were doing a greater trade with America than any other house, and their business with foreign countries generally was much augmented. So matters continued, without any particular incident occurring, down to the year 1840, when, by a terrible disaster which took place in America, the house had a gloom cast over it that was not easily dispelled. On the night of the 13th of January 1840, Mr. Samuel Henry was a passenger on board the American palace-steamship Lexington, sailing from New York to Providence. The ship took fire, and all the passengers and crew, with the exception of some two or three individuals, lost their lives. 'Amongst those who perished,' said *Hunt's* (N.Y.)

*Merchant's Magazine* of February 1840, 'there was no one more generally beloved and respected than Samuel Henry, Esq., of Manchester, England. . . . In his business intercourse with his fellow-men, rigid uncompromising integrity marked his character. No one knew better the true requirements of a merchant, or the generosity becoming a man; and throughout his life he ever maintained the strictest consistency of high mercantile principles and the most generous liberality. During the commercial distress which affected every class in the country for the past three years, Mr. Henry was here, yielding relief and assistance to those whom misfortune had crushed; and there are many, in this city and elsewhere, who will bear testimony of his open confidence and generous forbearance, when they were most needed and appreciated. Indeed, in all his business transactions there was a free honest spirit, a manly straightforward course of conduct, which won the esteem and confidence of all with whom he came in contact.'

When the news reached England, it was remembered that on the same night that Mr. Samuel Henry met his death so lamentably in America, his elder brother, Mr. Alexander Henry, was one of the guests at a Free-trade banquet given in Manchester. Both brothers had been stanch advocates of the principles championed by Cobden and Bright, and were prominent members of the Anti-Corn-Law League. In 1846, Mr. Alexander Henry was returned to Parliament, unopposed, jointly with the late Mr. William Brown, for South Lancashire, for which constituency he continued to sit during Lord John Russell's Parliament, taking an active interest in all measures having for their

object the promotion of commerce and the advancement of education. He steadfastly adhered to the principles of reform, which he had had the courage to avow at a time when they were unpopular, and lived to see and take part in the passing into law of many of his favourite schemes. He was one of Cobden's most attached friends, and a great admirer of Kossuth. On the two occasions when Kossuth formally visited Manchester he was received by Mr. Henry as his personal guest. On the first visit, the Hungarian patriot was welcomed with acclamation by the people of Cottonopolis; on the second visit he found the tide of popular favour turned against him, in consequence of the part he was supposed to have taken in connection with certain political intrigues; but his friend, Mr. Henry, stood manfully by him, and received him with as much warmth as ever. Mr. Henry was no mere 'fair-weather friend;' when once he had made up his mind that a man was worthy of his trust and confidence, and satisfied himself that his motives were such as honour and justice would approve, he was not the one to desert him in the hour of trial and distress. Although he attended assiduously to his parliamentary duties, Mr. Henry never relaxed his interest in the great business which he had been mainly instrumental in creating; he was still frequently to be seen at the Manchester warehouse busying himself with all that was going on, and assisting his partners with the best advice and experience. He continued to exercise a controlling influence over the affairs of the firm until his death in 1862, when the sorrow which fell upon the house of A. & S. Henry & Co. was shared in by the people of

Manchester generally, Mr. Henry having greatly endeared himself to his fellow-citizens by his many munificent acts.

The *personnel* of the firm now underwent considerable change. Mr. John Snowdon Henry, who had for some time been actively employed in the business, and Mr. Mitchell Henry, the two sons of Mr. Alexander Henry, became principal partners, and they, in conjunction with those other members of the firm who had been taken into partnership by Mr. Henry, continued to carry on the business with undiminished success. Mr. J. Snowdon Henry was elected M.P. for South-East Lancashire in November 1868, in the Conservative interest, and represented that constituency down to 1874. He engaged with much earnestness in many public movements, and was at one time Major of the 40th Lancashire Rifle Volunteers. In 1869 he retired from business altogether. He has a country seat at East Dene, Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight, and a town residence in Piccadilly. His connection with the firm of A. & S. Henry & Co. lasted through a number of very prosperous years, and when he retired it was as the possessor of a handsome fortune.

Mr. Mitchell Henry now holds the leading position in the firm; but, strange to say, he has never taken any actual part in the transaction of the business affairs of this gigantic commercial undertaking. Born in 1826, educated privately and at University College, he early in life devoted himself to the study of medicine, and at one time held an eminent position in that profession. He attended the St. Bartholomew's Hospital School of Medicine, and was made a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1847.

In 1854 he became, by examination, a Fellow of the same college, and for some years was assistant-surgeon at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He acted as surgeon and lecturer on medical jurisprudence for a considerable period at the Middlesex Hospital, and was in practice in London as a consulting surgeon. When his father died, however, and he found himself placed in an independent position, he gave himself up, in a great measure, to public life, and took leave of the medical profession altogether. Although not engaging himself directly in the business of his firm, he possesses a thorough knowledge of all the affairs of the partnership, keeping himself daily posted in the firm's transactions, and to a considerable extent directing its operations. As early as 1856 he tried to get into Parliament, unsuccessfully contesting Woodstock; and in 1868 he placed himself in the hands of his party at Manchester, and again met with defeat. All this while he was taking a prominent part in the various political movements which came before the country, and in many instances his advocacy proved of good service to a good cause. At length, in 1871, his opportunity for entering Parliament came, and he was elected for County Galway, along with Major Nolan, and has ever since sat for that constituency.

The part that he has played in parliamentary life is well known. While warmly espousing the cause of Home Rule, he has contrived to place himself on a more independent and more intelligible footing than the majority of Home Rulers, and there is no doubt he has been one of the strong elements of the party. The manner in which he has set himself to solve the Irish grievance

entitles him to be considered a practical philanthropist, and a true friend of the Irish people. In 1862 he acquired the sporting rights over a large tract of country in Connemara, and, becoming attached to the place, eventually bought an estate there, upon which he has built a residence where he resides for the greater part of every year, and where he has the opportunity of carrying out those agricultural experiments which have always had so great an attraction for him. The result of his experience thus far has been to convince him that the true mode of treating the Irish difficulty is to regard it less as a political than as a social matter; and, in Parliament and out of it, he has frequently expressed the opinion that no changes in the laws, whether as respects the land or otherwise, will prove effectual for the removal of Irish discontent until the condition of the population is improved by making the country in which they live more habitable for man. By his own experience he has shown what can be done by judicious outlay; and he contends that if some portion of the better class of the waste lands were acquired by the State, it would be possible to settle upon them, in comfortable circumstances, numbers of small tenants who at present live in a chronic state of destitution. The practical suggestion he makes is that, after suitable tracts of country have been acquired by the Government for this purpose, works of reclamation should be constituted, to be carried on by Irish labourers, who would be paid weekly wages, and would be housed in temporary dwellings, and that when, in the course of about two years, these tracts have been made sufficiently fertile to support families, they should be

divided into farms of thirty acres, which should be let to the labourers who have worked upon them, at rents calculated upon the basis of a percentage on the original outlay in the purchase of the estate and of the amount paid in wages, together with a small fund to pay off the whole sum in the course of a term of years, when the holder would become the proprietor of the fee simple of a well-ordered farm, and thus become as deeply interested in upholding the rights of property, and securing the observance of the laws, as the larger proprietor could be.

Mr. Mitchell Henry's efforts in regard to the reclamation of waste lands have already attracted much attention, and are destined to attract still more. A special correspondent of the *Times*, writing from Ireland in January last, described Mr. Henry's experiments as of the greatest importance to all those who had at heart the development of Ireland's agricultural capabilities. 'Tourists passing Kylemore Castle,' he says, 'in view of some of the most marvellous rock scenery in the United Kingdom, where the Twelve Pins present their precipices of black and gray, and whole faces of snow-white quartz, with intensely bright green slopes between, may have scarcely noticed the operations of drain-cutting and transporting of hard material, which are likely, as an example, to exert a commanding influence over the future of, perhaps, hundreds of thousands of acres of now wasted bog.' The cost of these reclamations has averaged 13*l.* an Irish acre hitherto, and in some instances the crop of turnips grown in the first year has gone far towards recouping the outlay. The gold medal of the Royal Agricultural Society was recently

awarded to Mr. Mitchell Henry for drainage in the West of Ireland, and, one way and another, this member of one of the leading commercial firms in the country has succeeded in making himself a decided authority on momentous agricultural matters. The appointment of an Agricultural Commission to consider, amongst other things, the question of the reclamation of waste lands in Ireland, and the selection of Mr. Mitchell Henry as a member of that Commission, will probably hasten the solution of the Irish land problem considerably. In these and other matters connected with the amelioration of the condition of the Irish people Mr. Mitchell Henry has shown untiring zeal; and if his English friends feel regret that he should have identified himself so intimately with Irish questions as to cut himself adrift in some degree from more general political projects, his Irish friends, on the other hand, have the satisfaction of feeling that he is still better employed, and men of all shades of opinion will give him credit for honesty, and earnestly striving to come at the best and readiest means of assisting the inhabitants of Ireland.

The other members of the Manchester firm of A. & S. Henry & Co. since 1847 have been Mr. George Wildes, Mr. W. R. Johnson, Mr. W. F. Scholfield, Mr. Thomas Barton, Mr. N. Carter, Mr. H. Hitchcock, Mr. John Mitchell, Mr. James Dawson, Mr. Thomas A. Corry, Mr. John Laycock, and Mr. John Moseley Williams. The five last-named gentlemen constitute the present Manchester partnership.

Mr. John Mitchell has been connected with the firm since 1844. Until 1868 he was concerned in the management of the

Leeds and Bradford branches, and resided principally at Bradford, in which town he acquired considerable influence as a public man. He was for a long period a member of the Bradford Town Council, of which body he was created alderman. Like Mr. Alexander Henry, he was a pronounced Free-trader and one of Kossuth's most intimate friends and admirers. When Kossuth visited Bradford, Mr. John Mitchell entertained him, and he always warmly advocated the Hungarian's cause. During the time that the French Commercial Treaty was being negotiated, Mr. John Mitchell rendered much useful assistance to Mr. Cobden—assistance which the great Free-trader gratefully acknowledged. On commercial matters Mr. John Mitchell was always regarded as a high authority, and both in Yorkshire and in Lancashire he has done much good work for the advancement of the interests of trade. In politics Mr. John Mitchell has always been what is called an advanced Liberal. When the present Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Forster, was first brought forward as a parliamentary candidate for Bradford, Mr. John Mitchell was his chairman, and he seconded Mr. Forster at the hustings. Previous to that he had acted as chairman for the well-known political veteran, General Perronet Thompson. After removing to Manchester in 1868, Mr. John Mitchell was made a member of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, of which important public body he is now a director.

The remaining Manchester partners have all been with the firm many years, some of them having risen from the humble position of warehouse-boy to that of master. Mr. Alexander Henry always



acted upon the principle of rendering the interests of his best and most industrial servants identical with his own, and to the carrying out of this principle doubtless much of the success which has been achieved by the firm is due. The departmental knowledge and long business experience of these gentlemen, their general unity of action, and their determination to carry out the precepts of the high-minded and honourable men by whom they were preceded, have kept this firm, through all the mutations of trade, in the same relatively high position which it held in the early years of the century, when the operations of commerce were on a much smaller scale than they are to-day.

The chief branch establishment carried on by Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co. is at Bradford, where for nearly forty years their turnover in the woollen and worsted trades has been exceedingly great. The present palatial warehouse building in which the Bradford business is carried on may be justly regarded as one of the finest buildings of the kind in the kingdom, being vast in extent and of considerable architectural beauty. This house was started at the right time and with the right men. The worsted trade was just entering upon the most profitable stage of its development, and the gentlemen upon whom the task devolved of taking the full advantage of this circumstance were happily possessed of the requisite trade knowledge and the necessary ability and integrity to make the best of their opportunities. As we have seen, Mr. John Mitchell was for a lengthened period connected with the management of this branch, and after his going over to the Manchester house, the conduct of this

important business chiefly devolved on Mr. Henry Mitchell, who, in conjunction with Mr. D. M. Douglas, who manages the home department, and Mr. T. S. Brailsford, who has charge of the continental business, still continues to preside over the fortunes of the Bradford house. Mr. W. R. Haigh was also, until three years ago, one of the partners in the firm; and at Bradford in the first instance, and subsequently as manager of the branch house at Huddersfield, assisted materially in adding success to the general undertaking. It may be as well to state, perhaps, at this point that the name of Mitchell, which crops up so frequently in this partnership, does not imply relationship. Mr. Mitchell Henry is not related to Mr. Henry Mitchell or Mr. John Mitchell, nor are the two last-named gentlemen related to each other.

Mr. Henry Mitchell has long been one of the leading public men of Bradford. He first came to the town in 1841 as manager for Messrs. Wm. Fison & Co., the firm of which the Right. Hon. W. E. Forster was and is still a member. Mr. Mitchell continued with Messrs. Fison & Co. until 1848, when he became buyer for Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co. His success in the latter capacity was such that when he had been four years in the firm's service he was made a partner. From that time (1852) to the present Mr. Henry Mitchell has devoted his energies to the commercial enterprise with which he thus became linked, bringing to the work an intimate acquaintance with all the details of the worsted trade, and an amount of business sagacity and energy which, combined with the ability and tact of his partners, served to place the Bradford house in the front

rank of local merchant firms. At the time when Mr. Mitchell entered the service of Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co. the population of Bradford was not more than 80,000; the town has now a population of at least 180,000, and the trade of the district has increased in a corresponding ratio. Some idea of the part that the Bradford house of A. & S. Henry & Co. has played in this rapid development may be formed when it is stated that about 600,000 pieces of cloths and stuffs are purchased by this house in a single year. Taking the average length of these pieces as fifty yards, we get the large total of 30,000,000 yards, or over seventeen thousand miles' length of textile fabrics—enough, one would think, to clothe a whole nation. That one establishment, and that only, after all, a branch concern, should be able to turn over such a large quantity of goods as is represented by these figures, is something to marvel at even in these days of gigantic dealings. What formidable array of figures would be arrived at by the addition of purchase returns of the parent house and the other branch establishments is more than the imagination can grasp. During the early years of his partnership Mr. Henry Mitchell devoted himself with rare assiduity and success to the management of the business affairs intrusted to him; and as time went on, and his ability and high principles came to be known and recognised, he was urged to take upon himself the performance of those public duties which he was considered so well qualified to execute. In the year 1870 he was elected a member of the Bradford Town Council; and his services met with such approval that he was afterwards made Alderman, and in 1874-5 became Mayor of

the town. During his term of office as chief magistrate Mr. Mitchell inaugurated many useful movements, and won the esteem of the inhabitants in a remarkable degree. In trade matters Mr. Mitchell has always been looked upon as one of the chief local authorities, and the good work he has achieved as a member of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, and in promoting the scheme for the establishment of a technical school in Bradford, will yield results which will be an enduring monument to his commercial zeal and foresight. Since 1877 Mr. Mitchell has been President of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, and at the meetings of this important body his utterances on matters affecting the mercantile interests of the community have been invariably marked by a strong spirit of practical wisdom, and in many instances have sensibly aided the solution of difficult commercial problems. There is no project, perhaps, with which his name is more intimately associated than that of the establishment of the Bradford Technical School, of which he is president, and which has been largely assisted by his generosity. He has watched the rapid progress made in France and Germany in the manufacture of textile fabrics, and has noted the special attention these countries have given to the imparting of technical instruction. He saw clearly enough that if England was to retain its supremacy in the production of worsted fabrics it was necessary that a higher and more systematic training should be adopted on the part of those whose lot it would be to carry the trade forward in the face of foreign competition; and he set his heart on establishing in Bradford a technical school which should be in advance rather than behind

anything of the kind attempted abroad. He was mainly instrumental in sending a number of artisans connected with the various departments of the Bradford trade over to France in 1878, during the time of the Exhibition; and their reports on the collection of textile goods displayed in the great building on the Champ de Mars, and on the technical schools which they were enabled to inspect at Rheims and other places in France, have been amongst the most important of recent contributions to the literature of commerce. The result of the endeavours which have thus been made for the formation of a technical school in the metropolis of the worsted district is that a new building is now in course of erection on a scale of completeness which will throw into the shade any previous attempts made in this direction in the country. The laying of the foundation-stone of this edifice, in June last, was an event which created great interest, the Masters and Wardens of the Clothworkers' Company being present at the ceremony. The Clothworkers' Company have recognised the importance of the institution by contributing the handsome sum of 3000*l.* to its building fund, as well as an annual sum, and founding several scholarships in connection with it and the Yorkshire College of Science. On the occasion of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 Mr. Mitchell was appointed by the British Government English judge for woollen and silk fabrics, and the report he subsequently published on these fabrics was of great value. Mr. Mitchell was also appointed to the important post of vice-president of the jurors selected to adjudicate upon worsted yarns and fabrics at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. His report on the

textiles and machinery in the exhibition, published in pamphlet form, was received with much attention by the commercial world, and there is no doubt the practical suggestions and conclusions there laid down have already yielded useful results. Addressing himself particularly to the subject of technical education, he said: 'France long ago recognised the necessity of providing special means of training for such of her citizens as desired to devote themselves to commercial pursuits, and this special technical training has begun to bear good fruits for them. In times not far gone by, we were, in knowledge of the processes of manufacture and in inventive ability, far in advance of any other country; but France, Germany, and America now run us very close, and in some particular matters of manipulation there is no doubt the French surpass us. Of course, our rivals have had the full benefit of English skill and English machinery to start with, and it is to their credit that since then they have tried to improve for themselves upon the advantages thus acquired, and have not been content to be mere imitators. This is what we must aim at also. We must not be content to be imitators either; we must create for ourselves. The cry for technical education, therefore, is no empty one—it represents a necessity; and there is nothing more encouraging, I take it, in the present aspect of the Bradford trade, than the support which is being given to the new Technical School, and the desire which is being evinced on the part of persons engaged in the local industries to avail themselves of the advantages thus afforded them.' In educational matters generally, Mr. Mitchell has not been less energetic. He was a

member of the first School Board elected for Bradford, is a Vice-President of the Bradford Mechanics' Institute, a magistrate for the borough of Bradford, and a Governor of the Bradford Grammar School. As a prominent member of the Wesleyan body in Bradford, Mr. Mitchell has also entered with much earnestness into the advancement of many leading philanthropic and religious movements, and as chairman of public meetings his services have often been in request. Mr. Mitchell has likewise interested himself in political questions, and was desired, we believe, to stand for Bradford in the Conservative interest at the last General Election. He was content, however, to accept the humbler position of chairman of Sir H. W. Ripley's committee, and went through the campaign without a disrespectful word being said against him by his opponents during all the heat and excitement of a fierce political contest. Mr. Mitchell commands the esteem of all classes of the community for his tried integrity, his public-spirited conduct, and his manly modesty.

Having thus briefly sketched the personal histories of some of the principal members of the firm of A. & S. Henry & Co., it will be interesting to describe something of the nature and extent of their business transactions. With that object in view we will first glance into the interior of the Manchester establishment. The warehouse fronts into Portland-street and York-street; and since it was built, nearly fifty years ago, its external architectural importance has been dwarfed to a considerable degree by the erection of one or two neighbouring buildings of greater pretensions. Even yet, however, there is an internal vastness about the warehouse which

will largely atone for the absence of external embellishment. Utility, not ornament, was the prevailing idea for business premises in 1836, and utility is stamped upon every wing and corner of this building; one may walk through room after room, and ascend floor upon floor, without coming upon a waste space anywhere. Now we walk through seemingly endless vistas of calicoes, walled in regular order and marked off in equal blocks, like the streets of an American city; now we plunge into the midst of a busy silent crowd of workers engaged in the arduous duties of packing; and now we turn into a room where we find ourselves surrounded by muslins, laces, curtains, and all descriptions of light and airy materials. Indeed, there is almost every variety of goods to be met with in this warehouse. Textile fabrics of course form the chief item in the daily business programme, but A. & S. Henry & Co. by no means confine their operations to this class of goods. Dealing mainly with foreign countries, and with some remote lands far distant from direct European communication, they find themselves called upon to provide customers with materials and commodities not generally classed with Manchester goods. Nothing comes amiss to them in the way of an order. They have no more objection to supplying Panama hats for American planters, saddles for Brazilian horsemen, whips for Mexican mule-drivers, tin cans for Sandwich Islanders, earrings for natives of Central Africa, preserved meats for Siberian peasants, fishing-tackle for Canadian anglers, or hair-pins for the damsels of Patagonia, than to supplying simple calicoes or muslins for the ladies of Italy or Spain. There

is scarcely a country with which England has dealings in either hemisphere that this Manchester establishment has not orders from at this present time. A peep into the room where a number of men are busy packing, directing, and despatching goods will suffice to show what various parts of the world the firm has connection with. What a large number of bales are being made up for the interior of South America! Many of these bales have to be conveyed hundreds of miles on the backs of mules, and in all these instances the instructions are to make each of the packages of a certain specified weight, for convenience of transport, the mules being protected by the authorities from being burdened with any heavier load. The fact that the packages are carried in pairs, one strapped to each side of the animal, has also to be borne in mind. For Australia the goods are packed in such a manner as to guard them effectively from being damaged by water. The voyage to the Antipodes is a long one, and the probabilities of the bales being brought into contact with water at one time or another have to be taken into account; consequently, in addition to the ordinary wrappings of tarpaulin, calico, sheeting, and what not, a complete coffin of tin is provided, and outside all that comes a wooden case, duly hooped and nailed. A huge bale of dyed prints is being got ready for Honolulu, to which place it will be shipped *via* San Francisco. For the United States and Canada the packing does not require to be so substantial, it only being a question of a few days between their being at Manchester and at New York, Philadelphia, or Quebec. Bales of prints are in course of packing for Vera Cruz, bales of

coloured scarves for Demarara, bales of shirtings for Mazatlan, bales of shawls for the west coast of Africa, bales of coloured stripes for Havannah, and bales of Arctic shirtings for Norway and Sweden. In some cases smaller packages than those intended for the backs of the mules have to be made up, the goods having to be carried over long interior journeys on the backs of fleet-footed Indians. Wagons belonging to the different railway companies are backed up in steady succession to the open doorways, and as the bales, boxes, and packages are hooped, 'lagged,' directed, and made ready for shipment, they are hurried on to the wagons, and probably within a comparatively few hours the whole mountainous pile will be dispersed amongst various outward-bound ships and on their way east, west, north, and south to their respective destinations. The final process of pressing and packing is speedily done; the goods come down from the upper rooms by one or other of the elevators which are kept continually at work the day through, and are put into hydraulic presses, which squeeze and squeeze the cottons, stuffs, woollens, or whatever they may be, down to a half or a third or a quarter of their original bulk, and before they leave the presses they are fastened up and made secure against recovering their amplitude any more on this side of the world.

The basement floor is mainly set apart for the storing of gray calicoes, where thousands of pieces, the product of Lancashire looms, lie ready for shipment at the call of the firm's customers. At present it is not known whether the Sandwich Islands, or Cape Colony, or China, or, indeed, what place soever, will send for these goods; but the order

for despatch will not be long in arriving from somewhere, depend upon it, for A. & S. Henry & Co. are not accustomed to keep large unsaleable stocks on hand.

The middle floors are divided into departments. There is a room given up entirely to velvets, where richness of colour and beauty of design meet the eye at every turn. The prevailing Pompadour style of design has pervaded this department; and its delicate tracery makes its way through all shades and colours of velvets. In another room we come upon wall on wall of cords—great heavy pieces, each measuring over a hundred yards in length, and worth at least 10*l*. Then we find ourselves among piles of plain and printed moleskins, some got up in the style of fancy cloths, and which, we are told, are largely patronised by the American working man, though despised and rejected by his British brother, who prefers 'the real thing,' whatever it may cost him. In the shawl department we are confronted with all the hues of the rainbow, wrought out in fantastic designs upon materials intended to delight the eye of the coloured ladies of various tropical regions. One very wonderful specimen of a scarf is presented to our view. It contains no fewer than nine separate and distinct patterns, and is one of a large order in course of execution for the West Indies. The origin of this conglomeration of stripes, zigzags, squares, leaves, flowers, and diagonals was somewhat curious. In sending out patterns to distant parts, it is usual to forward a length of piece, upon which the patterns are wrought one after another in sections just sufficient to show each figure complete, the result being several yards' length of fabric divided up into panels, as it were, of varying breadth,

according to the largeness of each pattern. This is much more convenient than sending separate patterns detached from each other; and as every section is numbered and priced, the customer at the other end has nothing to do in ordering goods but to quote one of the section numbers. In the case referred to a length of nine patterns was sent out, and the customer wrote and ordered so many hundred dozens of the 'pattern sent.' This puzzled the Manchester people considerably, and they wrote back inquiring *which* pattern. The reply came, 'The whole lot.' And this was still more mystifying; for an order for sundry hundred dozens of each of the nine patterns was something so unusual—at all events with this particular customer—that Messrs. A. and S. Henry thought it well to write once again and inquire if they understood the matter aright. The next communication from the West Indian trader, fortunately, put the thing clear beyond all doubt: what was wanted was so many hundred dozens of scarves exactly similar to the pattern length; and so it came about that a variegated mixing of nine separate patterns in one scarf was accepted as answering a negress's notion of beauty and effect. And in the particular region to which these goods are being sent from time to time, the pattern-length scarf is probably now considered the leading fashion. Many curious combinations of colour, which would be hurtful to the eyesight of a European lady, are here effected, and find favour in the eyes of the denizens of tropical climes. For the most part, the colours are bright and dazzling, reds and yellows carrying the palm; but there is one intermingling of blue and green—colours



which are not commonly considered to be in harmony—which is not only novel, but effective.

In another department we come upon a multitude of samples, arranged mostly in books, and including a marvellous variety of articles. We see samples of every description of hosiery, waterproofs, horse-cloths, sewing-cottons, pins, fishing-tackle, trimmings, gloves, laces, oilcloths, elastics, and one knows not what. Boots, hats, wire mattresses, sail-cloths, bed-ticking, vestings, cotton suits, blinds, drills, and a thousand other useful objects come within the scope of this department. There are also departments for coloured checks and stripes, for printed calicoes, for cretonnes, for white shirtings, men's wear goods, linens, and so on. It is, indeed, an entertaining day's work to make the tour of all these various rooms; and when, in the end, you are admitted within the counting-house sanctum, and see a large square room with row upon row of desks, and some thirty or forty clerks busily engaged in making out invoices, writing out orders, inditing letters, and entering items in ponderous ledgers—which ledgers are labelled 'Brazil,' 'China,' 'Japan,' 'Mexico,' 'Australia,' 'Canada,' 'West Indies,' and so on—you are doubly impressed by the magnitude and variety of the operations carried on in this one concern.

Much more might be said descriptive of Messrs. A. and S. Henry & Co.'s Manchester warehouse; but as it is necessary that we should give some idea of the appearance of things in the Bradford house as well, we may give our attention to the latter 'straight away,' as the Americans would say.

The Bradford establishment is a massive and substantial stone

building in the Italian style of architecture, possessing an extensive frontage, and being six stories in height. It is, for a warehouse building, one of the finest and most imposing erections in the country.

The ground floor of this warehouse is divided into large rooms, one series of which is devoted to the receipt of purchased goods from manufacturers and dyers, and the other series to the final despatching of the goods to their destinations. In what is called the gray-room, pieces are continually being received from the makers, just as they have come from the looms. As they come in, they are duly entered and checked, and, all being found correct, are despatched to the dyers without delay to be dyed. Carts from the various dyers are hourly in attendance, receiving or delivering pieces. Some dyers have a reputation as dyers of 'blacks,' others as dyers of special colours; and the gray goods are sent to firms according to their several abilities. When the goods come back 'dyed and finished,' they are immediately despatched to the higher regions of the warehouse, and allotted to their proper departments. It is, of course, known from the first which department has bought the goods. The business of the house is carried on in three separate sections—the A division, the B division, and the C division. The A division takes in the whole of the American trade, B the Home trade, and C the Continental. In the period of half a year, as many probably as thirteen thousand lots of goods will be received in each of these departments.

As the pieces come in from the dyers they are conveyed by hoists to the making-up rooms on the upper floors. To begin with, each

piece is examined by one of the 'overlookers,' whose eye is quick to detect any error of shade or 'bad place.' Defective pieces are thrown out and the manufacturer or dyer, as the case may be, is communicated with regarding them, and the damaged goods have to be taken back or allowed for. Sometimes it is difficult to make out whether a particular defect is the fault of the manufacturer or the dyer, and in this dilemma the merchant leaves them to settle the matter between them. All being correct, however, the pieces are submitted to the operation of measuring. This is not done by means of the yardstick, as the uninitiated might suppose, but by machinery worked by steam. The measuring-machine consists of sundry wheels which set a beam rapidly revolving, carrying with it a piece over a series of tables and rollers marked off into yards. In a few seconds the piece is carried through its whole length, and the youth who 'minds' the machine writes in chalk on the piece the correct number of yards. The pieces, although they are always ordered of certain lengths, vary to some little extent, and all these variations have to be taken into account in settling with the manufacturer. There are also a number of machines which measure and roll the pieces at the same time. These are called 'clock' machines, from the fact that they measure by means of an indicator.

After the pieces have been measured, they are sent to be rolled, and here again special machinery comes into play. A board, the width of the piece, is placed in the grooves of the machine, and as soon as the end of the fabric has been attached to the board the machine is set revolving, and in a very short space of time

the piece is taken out, and neatly and smoothly wrapped in the form in which pieces are seen in the drapers' shops. The work of making and supplying piece-boards is in itself an extensive local trade, and in this warehouse there are thousands of such boards piled up in immense stacks. For some materials and some markets inch boards are required, for others half inch or quarter inch, and some customers have a partiality for certain colours of paper as edgings for the bevelled edges of the boards. Blue edgings are chiefly used, green comes next, and some consumers demand yellow or white edgings. When the pieces have been rolled, they are intrusted to the hands of the persons whose duty it is to affix shields, bands, and tickets to them, and it is surprising what an amount of artistic talent and ingenuity is exercised on behalf of this department. The designing of shields and labels for pieces is an important branch of industry, and few more showy or elegant art scrap-books could be got together than is to be seen in the large folio volume in which Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co. keep their specimen shields, most of them being in actual use by customers, the rest being there for customers to make selections from. For South America and the Indies the designs are of the most fiery description; for the United States, stars and stripes and eagles predominate; and for the Continent and the Home trade, artistic ideas more than patriotic sentiment find vent. Some customers favour shields with portraits of celebrities depicted on them; others prefer floral designs; others again do not think their goods sufficiently attractive unless graced with portraits of national beauties. The quaint device of the three

black crows is appropriately worked up for a certain customer's black goods; and one buyer of Italian cloths thinks it most fitting to show on his shield the emblems of his calling; so the artist has grouped thereon the shears, and all the other best known implements of the tailor's trade. The 'Peabody Brand' is a proof of another customer's appreciation of philanthropy; and the go-ahead spirit is abundantly symbolised in pictures of railway trains, steamers, balloons, telegraph-wires, and so forth. Royalty naturally comes in for a large share of this pictorial display, the Princess of Wales, perhaps, outstripping all her rivals on this ground. Mottoes are also much affected, Latin and French ones showing scholarship, and terse English proverbs, breathing forth honesty, fair-dealing, and god-will, serving to express the sentiments supposed to be entertained by the vendors towards the purchasers. The shields, tickets, and bands having been duly affixed, the pieces are now wrapped in paper or glazed calico, and they are ready to be sent out to customers.

The kind of goods thus disposed of are chiefly what are known as stuffs, being produced in the Bradford trade. There is still the woollen department, however, that we ought to take note of. In this section of Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co.'s business a great change has been introduced during the last few years, since worsted cloths came so largely into fashion. Woollens of the old substantial sort have been largely superseded by these lighter and, perhaps, more elegant materials, and this firm have done much to develop this branch of business. In their large worsted coating-room there are hundreds

of pieces lying ready for despatching; and the manager of the department possesses a complete record of the history of each piece from the time of its quitting the manufacturer's looms, through every stage of dyeing, finishing, and making-up, until it leaves the warehouse as sold.

There are several other special departments, which we must dismiss by simply mentioning. There is the department devoted to the home fancy trade, where everything is sold by samples, each of which samples, it may be stated, is invariably cut out of the centre of the piece whose class it is to represent. Ladies' cloakings and costume cloths form a considerable item in the business of this department. Then there is the black department, the title of which sufficiently describes it. The most astonishing thing that the outsider observes in this division is the multitude of shades of black that there are. In the room set apart for winceys we meet with signs of a very active trade. Something special in the way of bookmaking is to be found in the sample-room. It is here that all samples are made up into books, according to qualities and colours, and much tasteful work is turned out of this department. There is likewise an index- or reference-room, wherein are registered samples of every customer's purchases, a strip from each piece that has been sold being retained for three years, so that if any dispute or misunderstanding should arise, the firm have here the means of referring to a tangible record of all business transacted. The greatest use of these sample collections, however, is in their enabling customers by simple reference to a past dealing to repeat any order, or portion of an order, within three years.

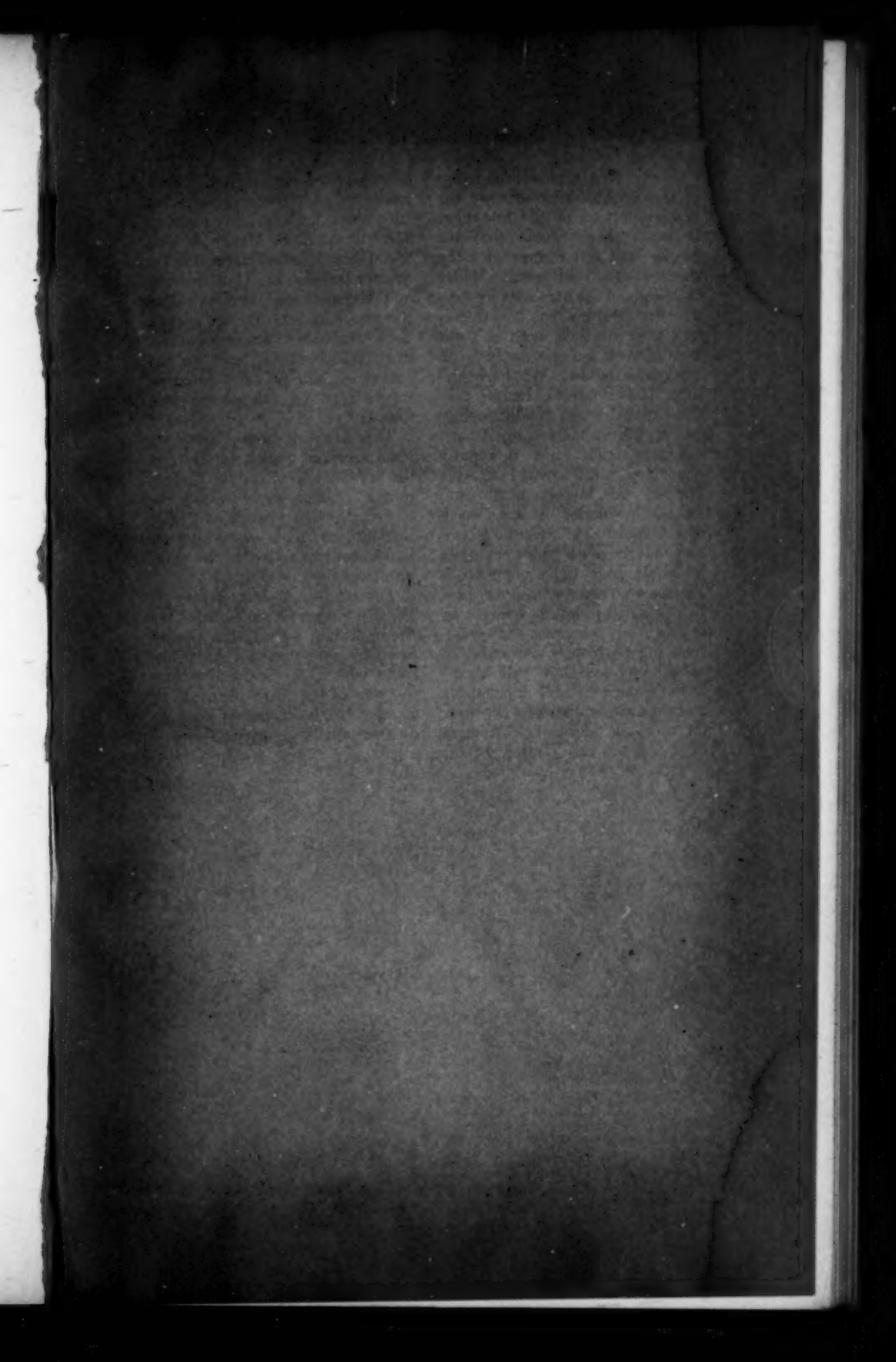
The offices and selling-rooms of the establishment occupy the greater portion of the first-floor. It is in these rooms that the buyers and sellers meet for the transaction of business, and where the heads of the house are located. The firm employ but few travelers, their dealings both at home and abroad being mostly with wholesale traders. At the beginning, the Bradford house, like the Manchester establishment, had almost exclusively an American connection; but it rapidly developed, until now it carries on one of the largest home and foreign businesses in the North of England. The amount of correspondence with other countries which is here daily going on is necessarily very large. Every post brings shoals of letters, every hour brings fresh telegrams. It is interesting to inspect a number of cablegrams (as they call them) from America. All telegraphic communication between the firm on this side and their customers or agents in the United States

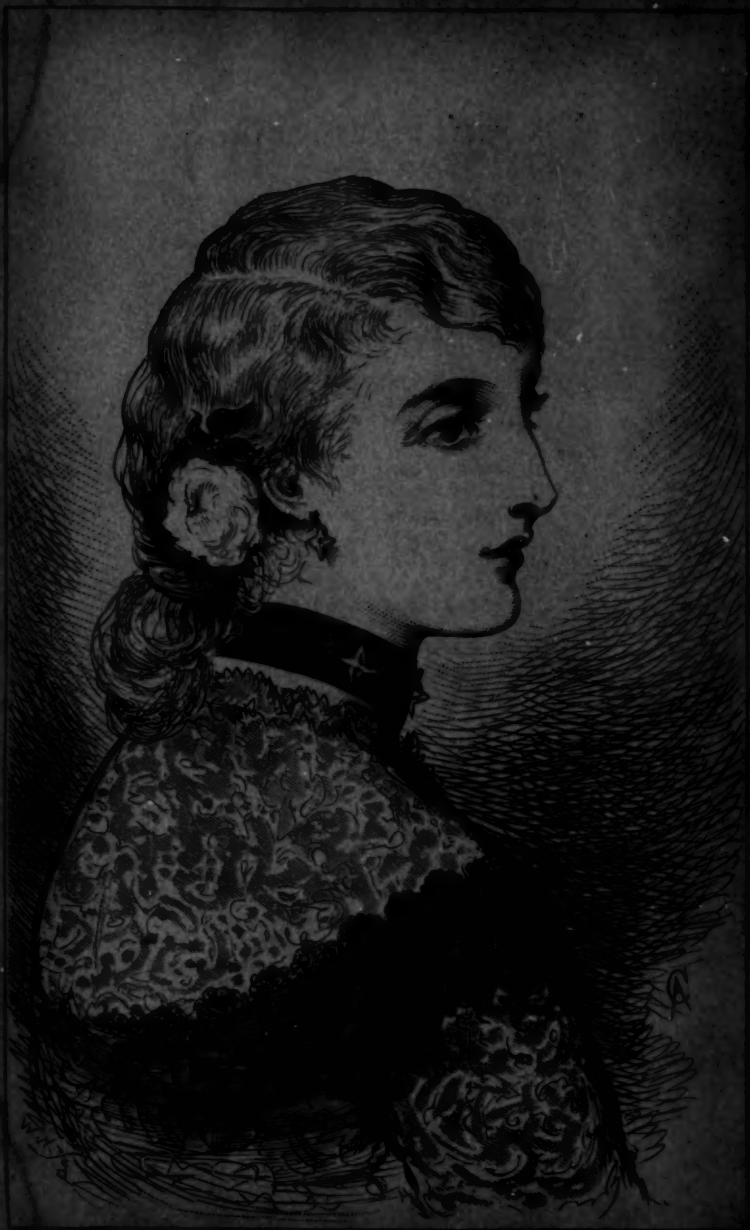
is conducted by cipher. Two words of such contrary sense as 'Kangaroo andante' may mean to Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co., 'Send three hundred pieces of three-quarter Italians,' or 'If at thirteen and sixpence send two bales,' as the case may be. By the system thus established, communications running, when translated, to the extent of ninety or a hundred words may be compressed into four or five.

The counting-house, with its little army of clerks, is also on the first-floor, as is also the dining-room, kitchens, &c. Indeed, into whatsoever department one searches, one finds everything on a scale corresponding to the magnitude of the business.

The firm of A. & S. Henry & Co. will always be remembered for the important part it has played in opening up that vast American trade which, for so many years, was one of the main elements of support to the manufacturing industries of this country.

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WHAT IS THY DREAM?

—*From the Poems*



## WHAT IS THY DREAM?

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SWEET face that gazest down the glade,  
Searching the solemn aisles of shade,  
Are past dreams dead, past hopes betrayed?

Was once thine heart a blossom fair,  
Laughing within life's spring-like air?  
Is life now over-hard to bear?

Thine eyes are pensive; whither stream  
The swift sad thoughts whose wild wings gleam  
Across thine heart? what is thy dream?

Ah, was it by some summer sea  
That Love's bright hand laid hold of thee,  
Fast hold, and then in vain didst flee?

And dreamst thou now of waves that broke  
Nigh some one's footstep when he spoke,  
And bowed thy spirit to his yoke?

Or was it mid the meadow-sweet,  
In some soft merry green retreat,  
Where thou couldst hear thine own heart beat

In such spot came the conquering tread  
Of Love; who bound about thine head  
His tender wreath of roses red?

Are all the roses white to-day,  
Now Love's frail foot has fled away,  
And left the woods and seashore gray?

Thou musest surely on such things,  
And round about thy spirit clings  
A memory whose mere faint touch stings:

A memory of those woods and seas,  
Where through once lingered passion's breeze  
And love's soft laughter: where are these?

GEORGE BARLOW.

## THE VIOLIN-PLAYER.

BY BERTHA THOMAS, AUTHOR OF 'PROUD MAISIE.'

### CHAPTER XXXII.

#### VENDETTA.

'At six o'clock I will be on the beach, where the ruined watch-tower stands. On receiving the sum I spoke of from your hands, I give you my word to leave here to-night.'

These words, in Linda's writing, reached Gervase on the morrow. They threw him into the utmost perplexity.

He had to go over to Naples that day on numerous errands. Already he had determined in his mind to take this occasion of withdrawing a considerable sum from his bankers, to be available to hand over to Bruno Pagano, when and how it should seem most advisable. He was in a liberal mood; ready with a *large* for Linda's brother, or any other poor devil who wanted to buy himself out of a mess. And, however averse he might feel to this second interview with Linda, he found anything preferable to treating with Bruno direct. The idea of having to make the *amende honorable* to such a fellow was absolutely intolerable to his disposition. It suited his pride better to offer the compensation thus, through a third party—like a government grant, a step involving no apology or personal communication whatever.

With regard to Linda herself, he felt inclined to believe she was tractable, and that he retained sufficient influence to induce her to

leave the place, and leave him in quiet. If she refused—well, was not the remedy in his own hands, and simple? There should be no secret here. His best safety indeed lay in resolving to take no further step in the matter, except with Laurence's perfect knowledge and sanction.

But he recoiled not a little from the notion and appearance of being forced thus by a worthless woman into doing right against his will, or when and how he did not wish. It was like avowing her hold over the situation, whereas he believed himself to be master of it still. So sure did he feel of his power to avert the present crisis and the instant necessity of any sort of confession. The opportunity was good—on his way back from Naples; he knew the spot exactly. Where the massive bridge crosses the ravine, a steep pathway leads from the heights above to the road, and thence through the brushwood to a bit of lonely shore beneath, where a little martello tower in ruins makes a landmark, and serves as a shelter for fishermen taking their midday nap. The whole affair need not delay him half an hour. The moment came for starting for Naples, and found him still halting between two opinions. Well, he would take time to deliberate *en route*.

'Promise me something,' he said to Laurence as they parted.

'What you will.'

'Not to go out to-day. Or, at

least, not to stir beyond the garden. The sun is like a furnace, and the scirocco is blowing.'

She promised, and stood in the porch watching him, till he disappeared down the narrow lane.

It was one of those sultry mornings dear, it is said, to mad dogs and Englishmen only. Gervase, like a true Briton, went on his march unperturbed. Laurence was well content to spend a quiet day in the *loggia*, where she installed herself as soon as he was gone.

She wrote letters to Felicia and Cherubina; they must not think themselves forgotten; then, yielding to the enervating effect of the atmosphere, she abandoned herself to pleasant idlesse, and the random train of thought that idlesse brings. She was beginning to wake from her day-dream; still, its brightness transfigured the future, which rose before her fancy as glorious and inviting as the paradise of Nature around her now. Last night she and Gervase had been making schemes—sketching out a perfect plan of life for themselves, and Laurence reverted to it again as an indulgence. It was unreal, but very charming. Not her old toilsome nomad career over again. From that she was parted—with a pang, it is true; but in one way or another she would remain true to her vocation; rid of the petty troubles and vulgar hardships that had been the flaws in her past course, she would retain the ideal part of an artist's existence only.

Time is nowhere on such a summer's day. Towards noon drowsiness and languor overcame her entirely, and threw her into a *siesta*, from which she was half roused presently by voices at the foot of the stairs, heard by her confusedly in her sleep.

'The signor is gone out for the  
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day. The signora is up above on the balcony.'

'Ah, I see. Well, I shall go up and speak to her there. Pray do not trouble yourself, my good woman, this hot day.'

The weather indeed was not encouraging to needless exertion. Teresa nodded, shouted out something unintelligible by way of announcement to her mistress on the balcony, and beat a retreat into the kitchen, whilst the visitor mounted the staircase.

The young bride, in a soft white dress, reclining there on a rude wooden bench, raised her head, and, but half awake, confronted the intruder—some one in elegant Parisian costume whom she did not instantly recognise. As the visitor threw back her veil, Laurence started up, with an air even Linda found hard to brave.

'Hush!' warned Linda promptly, in an undertone, coming nearer; 'your *donna* is still loitering about below. All the doors are open. If you speak loud it will attract notice, and these people are so inquisitive.'

Laurence had partly recovered from the nervous shock and the confusion of waking. She stood there like a statue, but her heart throbbed too violently for her to speak at first. Then she raised her eyes with a divine forbearance in them that fell on Linda like piercing sunlight and fire. It seemed to shrivel up her own wretched soul, and made her wish to sink into the earth.

'What can you want with me?' Laurence said faintly.

Linda was overwhelmed by shame and compunction. Her object in coming, though of the gravest, was temporarily put out of her head. What no amount of argument and evidence could have brought home to her, Laurence's simple presence and man-

ner at this moment forbade her ever to forget again. Had she not known it in her secret heart all along? This companion of her youthful days—Gervase's wife—was of another order of beings from herself.

Instead of answering she stepped back, made one vain effort to retain her self-possession; then her passion of remorse broke out.

'You should hate me,' she said excitedly, half sobbing; 'and you would, if you knew me, which I see you do not, or you would not speak so. O, you have cause!'

'No more than I know,' said Laurence, with an emphasis there was no mistaking.

Linda shifted her look uneasily, her eyes fell to the ground.

'I turned against you,' she murmured. 'I don't know what I wrote now, except that it was all lies. I vowed that you at least should never become his wife. It was to be, though; and what was I, that I should prevent it?'

She ventured now to raise her eyes timidly. Laurence had turned away her head, and was leaning against the post that supported the trellis, looking fixedly into the distance, where the sea broke through the dark trees.

Now Linda suddenly recollected her errand—it drove back her flow of penitence, and she resumed hurriedly, in another tone,

'But I come as your friend this time—to warn you. Where is your husband?'

Laurence started, as if stung.

'Take care, Linda,' she said, in a nervously strained voice. 'You have forced your way in here to tell me wild things, of which I don't know what to think—how far they may be true. You shall not force questions upon me.'

Linda, distracted with impa-

tience, began wringing her hands in despair.

'Where is he?' she repeated. 'Good God! how shall I make her believe me? He is in danger, and I came to warn him, for your sake and his, not mine. What is it to me now if he lives or dies, loves you or another? But he is in danger of his life, and doesn't know it!'

'What danger?' asked Laurence, in a terrified voice. Linda's uneasiness, which was only too genuine, had struck her with a vague deadly alarm.

'Tell me where he is gone!'

'To Naples.'

Linda caught up the words eagerly.

'To Naples! And he returns?'

'To-night.'

'By the high-road? Then all is safe. Safe!' She flung herself on the bench, shading her face with her hand.

'What is the matter? Tell me instantly!' asked Laurence, in painful bewilderment.

Linda rose, glancing uneasily round the garden below to make sure no one was within earshot.

'Bruno, my brother, is hiding in these parts. He was imprisoned on a false charge of robbery, brought against him by your husband. Have you heard the story?'

Something Laurence had heard, but vaguely and long ago.

'It was a mistake,' continued Linda; 'and the truth came out the other day. It was hushed up, and is forgotten; but the grudge Bruno bears he will carry with him to his grave.'

'I understand,' said Laurence breathlessly.

'Last night Bruno made me wait in the lane outside the villa to speak for him to your husband when he came out. Bruno wants money to get to America. Surely he has a claim to some compensa-

tion from the man who did him so cruel a wrong.'

'Do you mean it was refused?'

'No, no.'

'What is the danger, then? what does he threaten?'

Linda, at her wit's end with perplexity and shame at the thought of how she had been her brother's tool, began, as it were, excusing herself.

'Bruno forbade me to let out that he was here—he would not even tell me where he has found shelter—with some cottage people, I suppose. And he says he only wants money from the man who has wronged him. But I don't trust him, or feel as if I knew what he means.'

'What do you fear?' asked Laurence sharply.

'Don't ask me,' Linda covered her eyes. 'If they were to meet—Bruno is violent, unforgiving, madly revengeful. O Heaven! I don't know what I fear, but I felt I must come and warn you. In your place I should leave.'

Laurence was silent. Something in her countenance made Linda fear her testimony and sincerity were doubted.

'You don't believe me,' she sighed helplessly. 'O, but you might; and if ever you hated me, you need not now. I tried to harm you, but no harm came of it except to myself. And then how happy you are! You are his choice; you have his love and his honour; and I— When he saw me yesterday— I hated myself— He doesn't care enough to hate me—or he would. I am a miserable thing. Laurence, you might forgive me!' she urged.

'I do forgive you, Linda,' said Laurence, with a childlike earnest that sounded strange and yet familiar to the other. Was it Gervase's bride speaking, or rather the little girl who had been

her companion long ago? The tears were in Linda's eyes; she wiped them quickly away, and with them the transient emotion.

'Bruno must soon leave the country,' she resumed. 'If you will trust me with the money, and send it, I will see that it reaches him. But, for yourselves, promise not to stay here. Get him to take you away.'

'I will try,' said Laurence mechanically.

'And you will tell him that I came to warn him. Yesterday I was a coward, and dared not. I had just parted from Bruno, who was listening.'

'I will tell him,' said Laurence.

A little knot of flowers she wore in her dress had become loosened, and the wind scattered them over the balcony. Linda, with a sudden instinctive movement, stooped down and picked up a fallen spray. When Laurence turned she was gone—abruptly, as she had come. Laurence sank her head in her hands. Was it a dream, what had just passed?

Linda, her anxiety relieved, her conscience appeased, began rapidly to recover her coolness and complacency, as she went on her way back through the shady lanes to her hotel.

'How well she looked!' she thought to herself. 'Ah, it is work that wears. She has done right to give it up, as I shall do soon.'

It was four o'clock when Gervase, having got through his business, left Naples. The dawdling train, in an hour or upwards, took him the first fourteen miles to Castellamare. The railroad ends here, and he proposed to hire a carriage to take him part of the way home, and walk the remainder. It was growing cool and pleasant, and he was not sorry when the moment came to dis-

miss his shaky dust-raising vehicle. The route was at any time enjoyable enough to be worth taking slowly. At every turn he met convoys of peasants leading long teams of donkeys with jangling bells, laden with sacks; dark-haired country girls, with fruit-baskets on their heads, many of whom had a smile of recognition for him, and a greeting and a courteous inquiry after the signora.

That is perhaps the finest walk in the world; and the world is a fine place, forsooth. Of this Gervase would have taken his oath. His felicity was too high-pitched for by-gones to cloud and to blur it. It made him fearless, disposed him to defy Linda and her petty malice. As he walked on briskly, his rising spirits and self-confidence turned the balance. He made up his mind to go and meet her on the beach. He would use all his powers of persuasion to bring her to reason, dispossess her of any lingering inclination to tamper with his present prosperity and peace. For Bruno, he was ready with a round sum, twice what had been named, that should close that account in a manner gratifying to his pride.

Here was the chasm, crossed by the viaduct; here the rude side-path struck off; it was merely a dry water-course, by which little boys and boatmen scramble down to the *marina* below. Gervase had adventured the descent, with Laurence, weeks ago, and taken a boat back to the villa. The ascent was rough and toilsome, and Gervase trusted, when his interview was over, he might find some fishermen on the shore who would row him home; he would come upon Laurence by surprise from the garden.

The *marina* was a lonely spot at this hour, when there were no English ladies sketching the ruined

tower or bathing in the creek. No better place could have been chosen for a private interview. Gervase looked up and down the hill-side and along the shore, and saw nothing but a single boat, with a fisherman curled up in a sleeping posture at the rudder, too drowsy, fortunately, to come clamouring prematurely for the gentleman's custom.

Gervase was punctual, but Linda was not. When had she been? Still, this fresh sign of her inconsequence at this juncture irritated him. He would give her a quarter of an hour's grace, he said. As the minutes sped, bringing no sign, a great gladness came over him. He began to discover that nothing in him approved the step he had taken in coming to the rendezvous. He had yielded to the temptation held out by this chance of ridding himself offhand of a temporary annoyance; but he had done so in flat defiance of his judgment and his conscience.

Half an hour, and his patience was exhausted; he would wait no longer, but get home at once and by water, as the easiest, pleasantest way. The recumbent boatman was awake now, and had for some while been watching the Englishman with the avidity with which foreigners, who are always understood to be wanting something marketable,—a boat, a guide, a donkey, or information,—are accustomed to be regarded by indigent Italians. At Gervase's peremptory shout, 'Ho, there!' he sprang up promptly, making signs of intelligence and pointing to his boat.

'To the Villa Incognita,' said Gervase briefly. He continued to watch the hill-side, dreading lest he should see the expected figure approaching, whilst the boat was being unhooked and dragged down to the brink ready



for launching. The water was as smooth as glass, the breeze from the right quarter; it was an hour's easy row to the Villa Incognita. Gervase cast a careless glance at the unmuscular build and slender back of the fellow he had engaged to row him, and calculated that he had made a bad bargain. But he knew himself to be a good oar, and well able to supply any deficiency. He felt in no hurry to begin work, though; settled himself comfortably on the cushions, keeping his eyes still fixed on the hill-side. The boatman, with his back turned, stood propelling the skiff onwards, gondolier fashion.

Rounding the point of the little cove, they were out of sight of the watch-tower, and Gervase fell into a brown study, lulled by the gentle motion of the boat. Linda's non-appearance, though he felt heartily thankful for it now, was singular and a little disquieting. He thought of a dozen ways of accounting for it, but not one that was perfectly satisfactory. His anxiety made him eager to reach home, and he soon grew impatient of the slow progress of the boat. The Neapolitan mariners are no athletes. They contrast ill with the hardy mariners of Capri, who hold them in open contempt; and Gervase's Charon was clearly of the least efficient: still the passenger felt too lazy to do himself what he had paid another man for doing well or ill.

'Put up the sail,' he said at last, in despair.

'The wind is wanting,' objected the other.

'Nonsense! There is what will get us along faster than those oars of yours. At this pace, I may reach the Villa Incognita towards midnight. Put up the sail, I say.'

The man shrugged his shoul-

ders obstinately, and mumbled some sullen inaudible excuse.

'You won't?' said Gervase coolly. 'Steady, then, and I'll show you.'

He would let this surly Italian know who was master, and, by taking the law into his own hands, force him to obey. With an adroitness that showed early practice, he fixed the little mast and leisurely unfurled the little sail, the boatman all the while pretending not to notice, till Gervase began hoisting the canvas, and shouted to him imperiously to take the rudder; whereat he muttered an oath, but laid aside his oars to comply.

'Never knew an Italian object to put up a sail before,' was Gervase's comment. 'The idle block-head doesn't know his own business, that's the fact.'

The breeze was faint, but steady; they skimmed on quickly over the smooth surface, skirting the shore closely. Gervase's boatman, hot and out of breath with his half-hour's labour, took off his hat and fanned himself.

'Lazy scoundrel,' muttered the Englishman, glancing across at the steerer, who was watching him and his skilful management of the sail.

Gervase, though theoretically aware that the brown-skinned, bare-footed thing before him, in a striped shirt and battered straw hat, was a human creature, had till this moment seen absolutely nothing there but a pair of arms he had hired to row him, and that did their work uncommonly ill. He now awoke to a sudden consciousness that it was a man, and not an automaton, a sentient, thinking being like himself. The features, hitherto partly concealed by the broad-brimmed hat, were now suddenly displayed, and Gervase was instantaneously reminded

of her he came to meet. A disagreeable thrill of intelligence shot through him—suspicion appeared in his face.

'Ah, so you know me—*this time!*' said the steerer slowly, with unpleasant emphasis.

Gervase, with a *sang-froid* that galled his companion, replied, as quietly as if he had known it from the first,

'You are Bruno Pagano.' But as he spoke, a sharp flush of anger overspread his cheek. A trick, a dastardly trick, had been played upon him. Brother and sister in league together. What was their sinister object?

'It was my sister you came to meet,' said Bruno sneeringly. 'You may deal with me for us both. I did not consult her. The note—the summons—were mine. Our hands are alike.'

Forged—to draw him into a snare! Gervase half rose; his impulse was to pitch the scoundrel overboard. Perhaps Bruno had foreseen it; he parried it, saying,

'If you upset the boat, you are an assassin. I cannot swim.'

'Coward!' hissed Gervase.

He resumed his seat and his work, without, however, taking his eye off his steerer. He retained to the full his presence of mind. He measured the man yonder, and with the pleasurable assurance that on fair ground he could beat forty of him. At the first suspicious sign or movement he should detect, he was ready to resort to extremities. To swamp the boat would be a sure expedient. Bruno might sink or swim; Gervase could gain the land in a few strokes. Why, he could reach the Villa Incognita itself thus in a shorter time than it would take this fellow to row him there.

Bruno watched his countenance stealthily, and his next words

were directed at reassuring his passenger:

'I did not trust my messenger. You turn her round with your little finger. I wished to settle matters with you in person—it is safer. The promises you make to women, how do I know you will keep them?'

'You want money,' said Gervase haughtily. 'I am ready to give it, as I said.'

'How much?'

'Two hundred was asked for,' he said. 'I will make it five when I know you are in America. It will help you to go to the devil a little faster,' he added, in a lower voice.

Bruno murmured to himself, 'How generous is the signor!'

'I did you a wrong,' said Gervase presently, recollecting himself, 'though involuntarily; still I am responsible for the error.'

'How magnanimous is the signor!' put in the Italian.

'And any reasonable compensation I shall willingly accord.'

'Enough,' said Bruno; 'you have done it already.'

Gervase showed his pocket-book.

'There are English bank-notes here for three hundred pounds. I will add to the amount with pleasure; but for that you must leave these parts.'

Bruno pointed over the bay to where a large vessel lay at anchor in the harbour, gleaming phantom-like through the mist.

'The Albatross,' he said briefly, 'sails for Costa Rica to-night. After I have landed you, I shall still have time to reach it. I have friends among the crew who are ready to help my escape. Once on board, I shall be safe; but I am not secure for another hour in my hiding-place on this coast. The fishermen who have been sheltering me can do so no longer.'

He stopped a moment, and then added, with a crafty smoothness,

'Do you not see now why it was necessary we should settle our accounts to-night?

Gervase, though he winced at the over-familiar 'we,' felt enlightened and reassured. All now seemed tolerably clear. Bruno, forced to fly, and bent on getting his money into his own hands, had resorted to the nefarious expedient of feigning Linda's writing, as affording him a direct chance of gaining his point without further delay.

'Why did you not sign your own name?' Gervase asked sternly. 'I should have come.'

'I did not know you would take the trouble to walk out of your way for me; and an outlaw does not denounce himself and his whereabouts by writing letters.'

Gervase felt at that moment as if he could almost forgive the deception in the satisfaction of knowing that he had heard the last to-night of the affair.

It was growing darker on the water. The breeze sank, the sail flapped dead; but already the boat had turned a point whence the cliffs under the villa-gardens were discernible at no great distance. Gervase, with an exclamation of impatience, lowered the sail, and, seizing the oars, began pulling vigorously, Bruno regarding him with a curious expression.

'The signor is a better *marinaro* than myself. He is more accustomed to boatman's work.'

Gervase laughed.

'My man,' he said contemptuously, 'your work is play to us. We let you do it that you may live. It will be an ill-day for you when you force us into competition.'

He could not see the expression of Bruno's face at this moment,

or he might have repented the taunt. Something like madness gleamed in the Italian's eye,—a treasured wrong, fostered antipathy, ending in the fanaticism of vindictive hatred diseasing the mind.

Every word, look, and accent of the Englishman stung him as an insult or a blow. Gervase, in truth, could not even now quite rid himself of the impression that he was speaking to a boatman. The ragged shirt, grimed exterior, and generally ill-conditioned look were characteristic of an inferior creature, if not the most servile of slaves.

They were now in the shallow water under the rocks. Gervase paused a moment in his rowing, to take out his pocket-book, and tossed it down on the bench, saying significantly,

'The rest when you are in America.'

Something of rancour unappeased betrayed itself in the speech that burst from Bruno's lips,

'Ah, you will sleep the better when I am out of the country; confess it, signor.'

Gervase, with a scathing emphasis he could not repress, retaliated,

'Do not flatter yourself. Persons like you may curtail my banking account, but hardly my sleep. Rogues don't trouble the dreams of honest men.'

His words, or his manner of speaking them, seemed to have cowed and crushed Bruno, who made no retort and did not speak again.

Gervase was heartily sick of his company. The stupid fellow could not even steer ashore sensibly, but allowed his craft to run aground on the pebbles a boat's length from the land.

Gervase, with an imprecation

on his awkwardness, drove the oar into the shingle to force them onwards. Bruno jumped into the water, muttering aloud,

'The signor must not wet his feet;' and began dragging the boat up to the beach, showing more strength than the other would have given him credit for. He was bending down, occupying himself with the cable, when Gervase leapt ashore, and in doing so, found his foot slightly entangled in the chain. It checked him an instant. Bruno raised himself suddenly, as a snake springs. Gervase—

It was like a lightning-stroke. No cry, no struggle. A white, livid face before him, the gleam of steel in the uplifted hand, and a sound in his ears.

'For myself and my sister!'

Gervase staggered back and fell on the beach, in the black shadow of the overhanging cliff.

Linda thought that night would never pass. Terrors of every sort, in every shape, haunted her unceasingly. O, to know that those two were safe out of Naples, and that instead of betraying she had saved them!

Laurence was waiting in the *loggia*. The roses were pale tonight, the stars dull, the wind trembled in the trees, and the sound was sad and dirge-like—a spirit singing her happy dream to its grave. All thoughts were swallowed up in a wild, rising solicitude. The night-voices whispered of dread to her as she waited, expectation turning to fear, anxiety, torture.

But Gervase lay still, there on the beach. The stars came out overhead. The sea-birds hovering near flew backwards and forwards with harsh frightened cries. The bushes overhanging the cliff's edge murmured very softly, and

the waves of the tideless sea splashed and rippled to within a foot of where he lay dead. The aim of hatred is a sure aim, and a Velletrano never strikes twice.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE VIOLIN-PLAYER.

It was Carnival-tide in Rome. On one of the last and gayest of its gay days, an Englishman was slowly wending his way down the crowded Corso.

He was a well-known figure in Rome now. Thrice had the Carnival—that merry herald of spring—come and gone since Val Romer returned to take up his abode again in the 'city of the soul.' That he has done well, his art-progress testifies. These last years have been the most productive of his career.

He is triumphant—over himself; successful—in his line; satisfied—in so far that he has stood both ordeals—of society and solitude—and proved self-sufficient. Happy? That is another question. His outward life seems perfect enough. His inward lacks something, in its rigid concentration,—lacks that sympathy and human fellowship given to thousands to enjoy who are not worth his little finger. Carmen and Vashti are cold company, now and then.

He has an Italian friend with him to-day, a stranger in Rome, to whom the Englishman is enacting *cicerone*. Val knows every house in the street, and, as the procession of carriages files by, he can name the occupants of each as it passes, and point out the celebrities of art and politics and fashion.

Now it is a Roman victoria, too small for its contents—four

persons, all of whom make frantically friendly gesticulations to Mr. Romer, and one of whom colours with pleasure.

'What pretty English girl is that?' asks Val's comrade; and the sculptor explains. It is the Araciel family. They live at Milan, where the veteran player now holds an appointment. He has partially retired from public life, but makes occasional concert-tours. Now rolls by a private equipage, well-appointed to a fault. Perfection without pretension, every detail unexceptionable, in keeping with the couple within—the handsomest lady and sedatest gentleman present at the Carnival show. They also exchange greetings with Val; formal greetings these. The simple Italian becomes enthusiastic:

'Another of your countrywomen! Ah, this one is a beauty indeed. It is that Lady Brereton, is it not? I knew her from the bust in your studio. What eyes! *Molto di sentimento* there.'

'Yes, in her eyes,' returned Val shortly. 'It has all gone into them, I suppose.'

The next is an open carriage in an opposite style, with a far more showy exterior, huge coronet, and most conspicuous occupants. A lady, with intensely-coloured blonde hair, pink cheeks, and gaily dressed; beside her a gentleman, with a parched complexion, and hair that by rights should have been gray, but had been carefully restored to its natural colour of jetty black. The volatile Italian's curiosity was on the *qui-vive* again.

'Who is she? who is she?'

Val, with a look of irreverent indifference, replied,

'Eh! Linda Visconti, the opera-singer, don't you know? who married old Count Janowski. They say she lost her voice, but

finds compensation for everything in her title of Countess.'

'Janowski, did you say? Where is the Count's estate?'

Val shrugged his shoulders.

'Half Poland, the Visconti will tell you, would be his, if people had their rights. But his rents all come from the gambling-tables at Monte Carlo, where he lives, with his Countess.'

Six o'clock approaches. The Corso is being cleared for the horse-races, the finale to each day's sport. Val slips out of the crowd with his friend, who bids good-bye to his *cicerone*, saying,

'I must be at the doors of the Apollo Theatre at seven, if I am to get a place at the concert. Mdlle. Therval's name is enough to crowd the house.'

Val, as the fortunate holder of a reserved seat, had time to spare still. Leaving the revellers in the Corso, he walked back to his hermitage—the Villa Marta.

The hermit is not to sup by himself to-night, apparently. Brutus has already received certain orders—to his great gratification; for Val, in the opinion of his good and faithful servant, is too much alone. How if he should become a prey to melancholy and depression? Brutus had heard of a dangerous malady called '*Le Spleen*,' peculiar to Englishmen, of which the symptoms were taciturnity, gloom, aversion to the world, culminating in a desire to cut your throat to get out of it. He has been uneasy about his master ever since one day, when he surprised him in a brown study before his statue of the Glee Maiden, and Val flew into a passion at being unreasonably disturbed.

Thus the prospect of a supper-party is cheering to Brutus. He has carefully prepared a narrow table in the sculptor's studio, grouped the plants and flowers

among the marbles, as directed, and, pleased with the effect, naively takes to himself the credit of the arrangements. Val looks round, approves, alters a trifle or two, then turns to his factotum, with the serious question,

‘Now, what is there to eat?’

Scarcely a Homeric repast; but Val agrees to the bill of fare, and bestows some further instructions on Brutus; then presently goes forth again, to stroll down to the old theatre by the Tiber, where, to-night, Laurence Therval gives her violin-recital, and makes her first public appearance in Rome.

For more than two years, indeed, the world has lost sight of her. It is only a few months since—when her name had not been heard for many seasons—she appeared at a concert at Milan, then at other places, creating, it is said, an extraordinary impression, the report of which sends all Rome rushing to hear her to-night.

Strange stories are afloat, stories at variance with each other, and mostly inaccurate, respecting her long desertion,—the romantic history of her marriage with a young Englishman of distinguished position, and that tragic event at Naples shortly after, when he was found murdered on the beach by his own villa. That fatality was the talk of Rome for some time; but other startling events following thick, expelled it from men’s minds; so that to-day, three years later, those personally unacquainted with Laurence and her nearest friends have but a confused idea of the facts. Something of a mystery indeed has shrouded them for ever. The murderer was never discovered. Suspicion fell on a wrong-headed political blusterer, then under sentence of arrest, who was reported to have been hiding in the neighbourhood, and who might

have been prompted to the act by motives of revenge. But Bruno Pagano had disappeared; and there was no evidence whatever, no clue, that could fasten the deed on him more than another.

Val had not seen her since; never, indeed, since a certain time in England, when all his moorings seemed to him to be giving way at once, and he needed the sternest force of character to keep his course straight and his mind in health, and his heart from becoming disgusted with life and the world because he had been unfortunate in some of his experiences.

He wrenched himself away from all human ties, came back to Rome, and lived for his craft only. The beginning was rough, but he soon reconciled himself to the change; and it is only of late, when his mind has entirely regained its balance, and his art-fidelity and activity are secure against all attacks, that he has become discontented, and craves in his soul for what art cannot render. He can suffer solitude, but yearns more and more for human affection. In such moods his thoughts were apt to wander back to days long past, when Laurence and he were children together.

He took his place in the stalls that evening in a state of emphatic excitement. How will he find her to-night? Will she be changed?

Not beautiful, had they said? Val laughs. Ever more so, in his eyes, and in those of all who recognise its higher, finer manifestations. Surprise is one element of beauty, it is said—surprise that once made a dumb man speak. Half the charm of her face was in its delightful individuality. ‘None like her—none.’ But though her grave loveliness



was unimpaired, there was a change, nevertheless; and Val's first feeling of mere human admiration was succeeded by another impression—a sort of startled awe, as if before one who scarcely belonged to this world.

It was a relief to him when her smile came, half sad, but human; the smile of one who can still feel with others in joy as well as pain.

Val was no musical critic himself, but needed none to tell him how she played that night. As she herself could never have played formerly: it was more forcible, earnest, and pathetic. To Val she seemed to have added something to the divinity of music by her genius for its interpretation.

The clamorous applause in the theatre jarred on him. The instant the concert was over he got away, reaching home some time before his guests. Supper was duly spread. Val was in a queer state of agitation. Music had never affected him thus before. He tried to walk it off by pacing the studio impatiently, till the sound of wheels sent him rushing to the garden gates.

It was only a detachment of his party; Señor and Madame Araciél arriving together.

'She is coming presently,' said the latter, as Val helped her to dismount, 'with Cherubina. We drove on first.'

Val led the way into the studio, glad to get a few words with them alone. During the two or three days they had been in Rome he had failed to secure any private talk with them on the subject next his heart at this moment. And now he hardly knew how to begin. There was so much to ask, and his anxiety was so deep and wide.

'How is she?' The question

burst from him hurriedly, the moment they were inside the studio.

'She is better,' replied Madame slowly. 'Better than once we dared hope to see her any more. You heard to-night how she played.'

'It is the music,' said Araciél, 'that will save her to us. Is it not, Felicia? She will live now.'

'Tell me about it,' said Val peremptorily. 'You must recollect how little I know of anything since—'

'Since that dreadful day,' rejoined Madame, paling at the recollection. She proceeded with difficulty: 'The news reached us at Naples. The thought of that morning, even now, seems to take away the ground under my feet. We could not believe what we heard; we flew over to the Villa Incognita, and found her—' For a moment her voice failed her, and she covered her face with her hands.

'We feared for her mind, Mr. Romer. The child was so wild with grief. She had fever, and was light-headed, and the doctor said he could do nothing.'

'We had taken her away to Naples, where she lay ill for months. I think Cherubina saved her life. She nursed her,—never left her, night or day. The child was so fond of her, you know.'

'When first she began to get better, her memory was confused. Then her brain cleared. That was the moment we dreaded, Mr. Romer. It seemed as though, after all our care, she would only recover her senses to be struck down again, and driven mad by the shock. It was not so; but she sank into a strange languor from which she could not rise—a sort of death in life.'

'When she was strong enough we went to live far off, in the

little villa near Milan, which we have since made our home. I went with papa on the tours. Cherubina stayed behind with Renza. For a year she never touched her violin. All her zest and enjoyment in it seemed dead.

'There was an orphan child in those parts, whose story came to her ears through Cherubina. A little boy, with wonderful musical talent, but quite ignorant, and poor, and uncared for. She was reminded of her own childhood, when she was helped on by the kindness of strangers,—you and your father, Mr. Romer. She made the child come to her, taught him, brought him on, till, in a year's time, he was able to compete for and win a scholarship at the Conservatoire, giving him a free musical education. What she could not have done for her own good, she did for another's. The reward came. Her pupil left her with her interest and love for art awake again. She played now to soothe herself. She went to hear music. Her place and part in it claimed her; she felt she must not hang back. When we heard her—the violin-player once more—we knew she was saved.'

'God be thanked that has given her back to us!' murmured Araciél devoutly.

After a long pause, Val observed,

'She still plays under the name of Therval?'

'She means to keep it always,' said Madame. 'And she has voluntarily renounced all right to share her husband's fortune. The mother—'

'A crazy old woman,' put in Araciél.

'Made, or would have made, an attempt to question the legality of the marriage. It was sheer madness on her part, as no formality had been neglected.

She had to retract, and plead ignorance in apology. But Laurence is proud and sensitive, and she will have no more connection with her husband's people. It is best so. Her friends know her history. The great joy and the great grief of her life there is no need for the world to know.'

Just then the curtain over the entrance was lifted, and two figures appeared on the threshold. The others, engrossed in conversation, had not heard the new arrivals. Val started at the sudden apparition; yet there was nothing appalling in it. On the contrary, it was a fair vision. Soft, round, rosy Cherubina and her friend, as it might be Miranda and Ariel.

Val's hand trembled in Laurence's as he grasped it; but he forced down his agitation, and was careful not to trouble her by eager, curious observation.

Supper, if a pretence, was at least a distraction; and the host exerted himself to talk and make good cheer. Araciél and his wife seconded him well. Laurence at first took no part; but presently her voice was heard with the rest; and this meeting of good friends, if one of doubtful mirth, was at least not without its sunlight. Only Cherubina was silent.

Afterwards they walked out into the garden. The madness of the Carnival was at its height in other quarters of the town. From the quiet little grounds of Val's hermitage the far-off din of the revellers was fitfully audible. Some were hurrying to masked balls, others parading the streets in every conceivable kind of grotesque disguise, and extemporising all manner of tomfooleries. The laughter, the shrill falsetto of the dominoes, snatches of burlesque songs and dance-music, sounded oddly in the distance.

Now began a display of fireworks on one of the Piazzas. Araciél, having discovered a good point of view from the bottom of the garden, called to the rest to come and join where he stood. Cherubina took her mother's hand, and drew her away; and all pretended to be interested in watching the rockets and coloured lights.

Val snatched the opportunity thus offered him for the *tête-à-tête* he so earnestly desired. Now it had come to pass, he felt tongue-tied and abashed. He had too much to say.

They were standing by a little column with a statue on the top. The base of the pillar was buried in a bush of Banksia roses. Laurence stooped to pluck one of the flowers, saying,

'These roses grew over the lodge by the Villa Rondinelli.'

'The Villa Rondinelli' echoed Val. 'Do you mean to say you remember it so well as that?'

'So well,' answered Laurence, 'that I could tell you exactly where the different flowers stood in the garden: the heliotrope, the scarlet salvias, and tall white grass.'

'And it is just as it used to be,' said Val; 'the red flowers and the pampas-grass and the stream over the rock-work—not a thing different. I saw it last week.'

'Were you there really?' she asked, surprised.

'It is mine now,' said he.

'Yours?'

'I have dreamt of buying it back for a very long time—I think, ever since the day when it was taken from you and from me. Lately I have been in a position to make the purchase; and when the other day it came suddenly into the market, I was ready with my offer. A good place to spend the hot months in.'

'Well, I am glad it is yours again,' said Laurence heartily; 'to this day I could never bear to think of strangers there. All the time we were near, at Milan, I would never go over to see the place. It was childish, but I fancied I might find everything altered; and I have felt towards it as if it were my home.'

'Your home!' he repeated, almost involuntarily. 'Ah, Laurence—'

The expression of her eyes checked him. He shifted his look, saying abruptly,

'Are you not tired of standing? Come back into the studio.'

Brutus had cleared away supper and supper-table. Laurence went round, looking at the statues one by one, Val watching her rather pathetically. He was of a tenacious spirit, and clung to old hopes and associations. Is there any order in this life, or is it a mere chapter of accidents? To what purpose, he often asked himself, had they two been thrown together in youth, and become no ordinary friends? The threads had been let drop, and it seemed to him sometimes as though, ever since, he had been trying in vain to gather them up. Wild thoughts and wishes were careering through his mind at this moment, but he dared not give them utterance.

'My home,' said Laurence gently, by and by, 'so far as I may have one, is with Felicia and Araciél. I am rich in having them to come to when I want rest from my work.'

'You divide yourself between it and them.'

'Yea.'

'You could not be happier—otherwise?' he let fall earnestly, inquiringly.

'No, not now,' she whispered, almost inaudibly.

'The sight of the old place,'

said Val, after a pause, 'brought back all the old years. You don't mind my speaking of them, I hope'

'I like to think of them,' she replied.

'I thought over my own life since then, these fourteen years, and searched for the key to it all. I found one in you.'

'In me!' she repeated wonderingly.

'In you, whom for nine out of those years I never saw. But it isn't necessary to have a person always at your elbow for that person to guide your destiny. Would you like to know how you guided mine?

'I had no sister, no mother. My best idea of a woman was a dear child such as you were, who made me ashamed of everything in myself that was not good. When our great trouble came, the thought of you helped to bear me through it—gave me hope and courage. We lost sight of each other then, we had to go different ways, and even to myself it would seem as if I had forgotten you. It was not so, really. You influenced me still. Out of you sprang the ideal by which I measured myself. So when, years after, I heard your name again, heard of your playing and success, I said "It must have been so. She was true and constant."'

He stopped, and resumed, in another key,

'When we met next time, I seemed prosperous myself; but I was on the brink of getting spoilt. A little more, and I should have been one of those fellows of whom people say, "He might have done anything—he will do nothing more." Then, again, the picture before me of you, pure and faithful and devoted, helped me to open my eyes, and break away from a temptation that was mak-

ing me untrue to myself. All women are not good angels—'

He broke off; then raised his eyes appealingly, with a half-humorous glance lurking underneath, saying quaintly,

'At least I am nobody's slave to-day; and I haven't sold my soul to the devil.'

The gleam of drollery passed, to give place to an expression that surprised Laurence. Val grave? Val melancholy? There was no mistaking the mournfulness of his face at this moment.

'But the break left me a lonely man,' he said. 'And I suppose it is my doom to remain so always.'

Her eyes rested on his compassionately.

'So that now and then,' he continued, 'I ask myself whether what I've done is worth the price. My name is in the papers; great people come to stare at me and my studio; my statues fetch large sums, and so on. But the other day I saw a peasant-fellow in the Campagna, who was going to church in his Sunday clothes, with a broad grin on his face. He had wooed and won the *contadina* he had chosen, and envied nobody. But I envied him.'

Laurence listened. A smile was on her lips as he concluded; she cast a quick glance round the studio, saying significantly,

'Yes, it *is* worth.'

Val looked about doubtfully, still gloomy and downcast.

'I suppose I want too much, then,' he said; 'for I tell you seriously that such a life as mine is not worth having. Not to be loved is so dreary.'

'Not to be loved!' she repeated. 'Ah, how little you know!'

'Laurence!'

'Val!'—She caught him up quickly; the earnest sadness in

her eyes slew his bold rash hope almost before it sprang into existence. She resumed quietly,

'What I am thinking of does not concern myself. For me, all that—what you mean by it—is past and buried. I carry it in my heart. It is not dead.'

She was looking before her fixedly, as though at something—something he could not see—as she said,

'I think the human part of me died when he died. It is a spirit-life I lead now. It is the only one for me. But you, Val—'

Her tone softened. She laid her hand on his arm, saying delicately,

'If I were you, I should not look far to find the one who would love me as one would like best to be loved.'

Val's wits had gone astray. He looked at her vacantly and stupidly. Laurence laughed to herself.

'Our own life, Val, is ruled by our art. You have learnt it. I have learnt it. Whatever happens, it claims all we can give it. Our work is stronger than our will. It draws us.'

Her face was idealised by its intensity of expression. Val could have knelt to her; and it seemed a profanity to offer her his love. Yet, perhaps she read his thoughts, as she pursued:

'In a woman's life love is all or nothing. Mine was taken away from me, you know.'

She drooped her head, and let fall to herself,

'God sent love that we might believe in another world, where it shall be continued and made perfect.'

'How pale you are, Laurence!' said Val suddenly.

'I cannot breathe,' she said. 'Come into the open air.'

He led her into the garden. She recovered herself quickly, and said, noting his uneasy look,

'Do not be anxious about me. I am well now. She saved my life.'

Cherubina had strayed away from her parents, and was then seated on the steps of the pillar's base, by the rosebush.

'There is one,' said Laurence, 'who knows what love is; none better. She loves me; and for me would give away her own dearest hope willingly, and find her happiness in seeing that of those dearer to her than herself.'

Laurence spoke significantly. Val rubbed his forehead. A light crossed him. A new light, and yet—and yet, in the depths of his consciousness, had it *never* penetrated before? He could not have sworn it.

'Cherubina!' he muttered. 'I always thought her a child.'

'You were wrong,' said Laurence.

'What is she doing?' said Val curiously.

Cherubina was bending anxiously over something she was scrutinising in the starlight; and Laurence laughed,

'I know.'

'Picking my flowers to pieces, eh?' said Val, amused. 'That poor rose of mine has done her no harm; why should she dissect it like that?'

He pretended ignorance, but hardly needed Laurence's half-whispered word of enlightenment to tell him that his rose was the oracle whence Cherubina was trying to divine her fate. 'He loves me—loves me not.' Leaf after leaf fluttered away in the breeze.

It had come right, apparently; for Cherubina's face lit up with smiles. Then, vexed with herself for her folly, she flung the stalk

from her, and hid her face in her hands. Then she heard Laurence's voice calling her.

Cherubina started up, and came flying towards them, her cheeks crimson with confusion. It was dreadful to think she might have been seen at her silly sport just now. But Val and Laurence were discreet. Their faces told no tales.

'Cherubina,' said Laurence, 'should we not be going home soon?'

She laid her hand on the child's arm. The colour died away from the valiant little girl's cheeks as she faced those two.

'Yes, it is time,' she said quietly. 'You go back into the studio. I will call the others.'

She would have stood by and seen their love, had things been so, and ministered to it and to them, and been content.

Val was touched. He let Laurence talk to him of Cherubina, and elicit the admission that, supposing, just for argument's sake, he wanted to marry at all, there was no one, who would have him, whom he inclined to more.

'You will love her dearly,'

said Laurence; 'and not be alone again.'

'But you?' he said.

Her hand rested on her violin-case. In there lay her only life-companion. He understood.

Laurence's words were fulfilled. If, some months later, Cherubina was the happiest of girls, it was Cherubina who, when months became years, Val must admit to have made him the happiest of men. There is not a more lovable or more devoted wife in Italy, nor, it must be added, a prettier one. She has become perfectly indispensable to Val's existence—a fact which suffices to her own content; and the one thing the sculptor cannot understand, now is, how he ever got on at all as a bachelor.

Laurence is not separated from them, though her life is apart. They are all one family, meet often, and the bond of union between her and Val is of the strongest. But her own love-dream is past, and she wanders through the world again alone, with a loyal old comrade—her violin.

THE END.

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